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the comics magazine • 94

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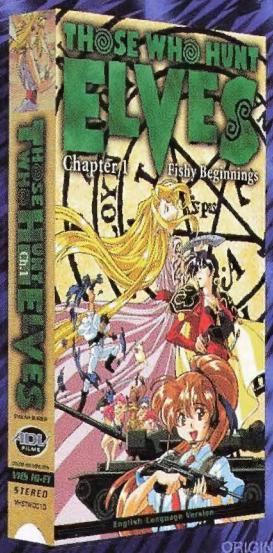

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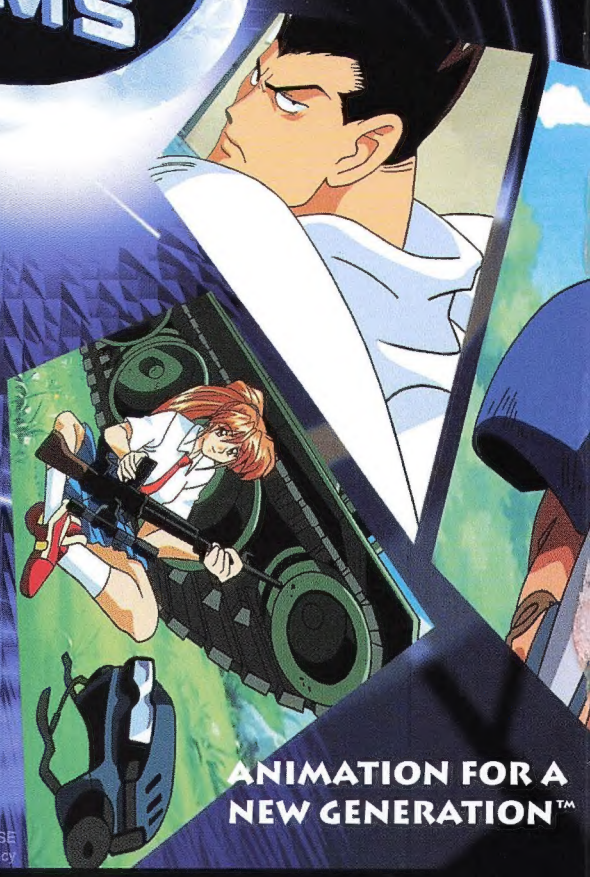

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SPECIAL JOE (BATTLE CHASERS) MADURIERA VARIANT COVER!

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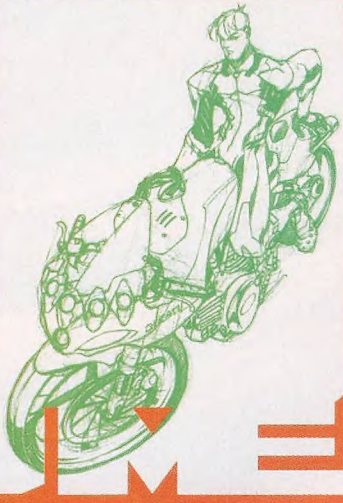

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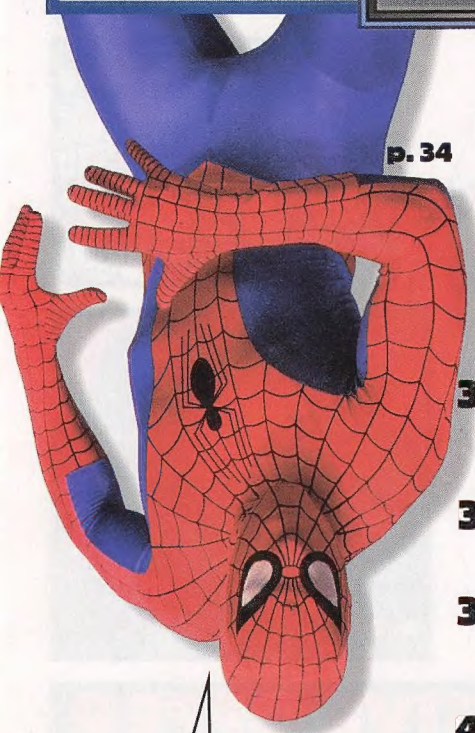
WIZARD contents

THE COMICS MAGAZINE • NUMBER 94 • JUNE 1999

HEY, OVER HERE!

Tying into our celebratory year-long countdown to the new millennium, *Wizard* looks toward the future in each 1999 issue. Flip to **page 30** to take a look at comic stores of the future–namely Kevin Smith's all-new shop. Then swing on over to **page 34** to learn the dirt on comics' biggest movie of the millennium: "Spider-Man"!

COUNTDOWN TO WIZARD 2000
ISSUES TO GO
86



HEY JIMBO, WHAT'S MY MOTIVATION IN THIS SCENE?

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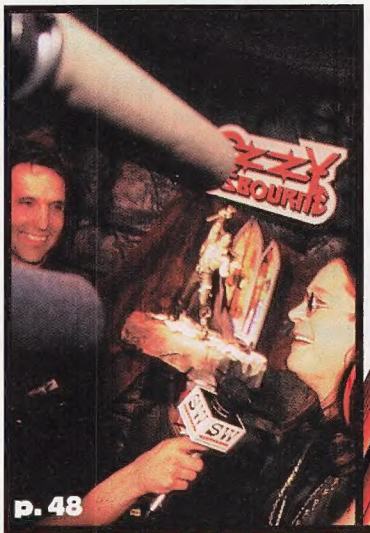

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Take a peek inside Kevin Smith's brand-new funkadelic comic book shop in good ol' Red Bank, N.J. Hey, you never know just who you'll bump into. **By Jim McLauchlin**

34 AMAZING
Despite its history of legal problems, "Spider-Man: The Movie" may finally get made. **By Tom Russo**

38 IT'S BACK!
The return of Wolverine's adamantium headlines a slew of big events that make 1999 one of comics' greatest years ever. **By Jennifer Moore and D.B. Nicholls**

42 THE WIZARD Q&A: HART FISHER
He's profited from a serial killer, been banned in four countries and gave Marvel a nasty ultimatum. Meet comics' most dangerous man. **By Scott Brick**

48 BALL BOY
Join Todd McFarlane for the most exciting 24 hours of his life. **By Joe Yanarella**

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ON THE COVERS

Lady Death, Vampirella and **Witchblade** (left) was illustrated and colored by Adam Hughes. To learn how to draw sexy sultry babes like Hughes, flip to "Basic Training" on **page 66**. To get the lowdown on the smashing "**Austin Powers**" sequel film, shag yer way over to our groovy Austin Powers movie-guide booklet packaged in the polybag. Yeah, baby, yeah!

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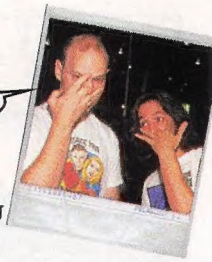
PHOTOS: PAUL SCHIRALDI; HART FISHER PHOTO COURTESY OF CRAIG MOLENHOUSE.

CONTESTS



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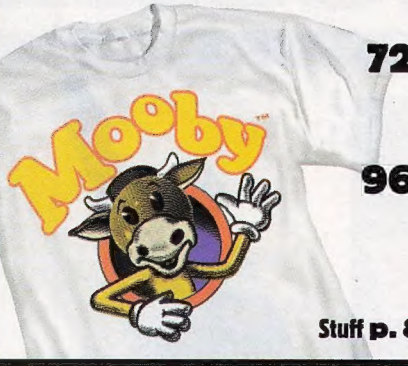
72 DAWN
Draw us up your own battle-ready Dawn, and you could win original Joe Linsner Dawn sketch, a Dawn hardcover, trading cards and *más, más, más*!

96 WIZARD WORLD: CHICAGO '99
Are we out of our freakin' gourds?!? Here's your only chance to win an all-expense-paid trip to this year's Wizard World comic convention in Chicago! Hoo hah!



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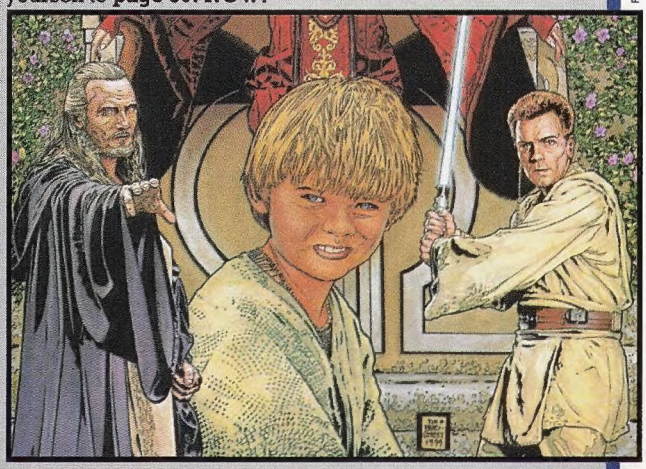
EXCLUSIVE OFFER

COOL STUFF THROUGH THE MAIL

STAR WARS #1/2

Freak out! Here's your only chance to get the exclusive *Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace* #1/2 comic tying into the most-anticipated movie of all time! Find out just what role Anakin Skywalker, Obi-Wan Kenobi, Qui-Gon Jinn and Queen Amidala play in the greatest fantasy tale ever. Force yourself to **page 80. NOW!**



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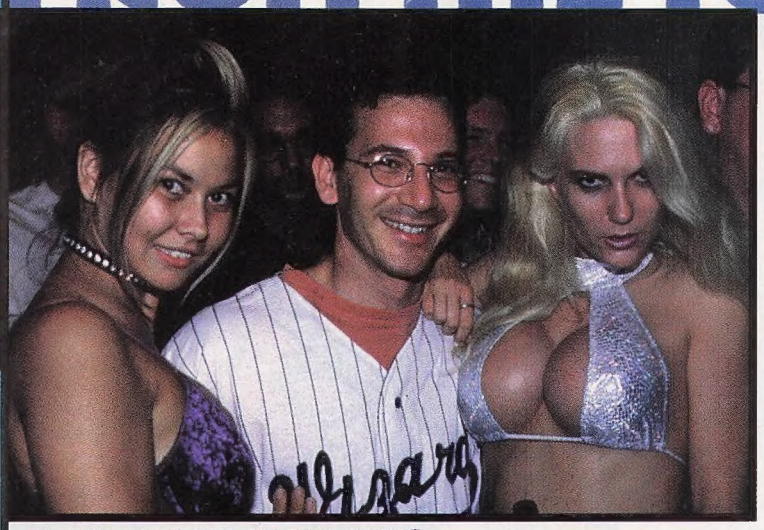

CAN YOU PICK OUT THE REAL BOOB?

SHAG ME, BABY

This is the second time in *Wizard* history that we have a character on the cover who is not a comic book character. The first time was when we featured the "South Park" gang last year. We just had to do it. Now, "Austin Powers" is such a great movie, you can't walk around the office without hearing "Groovy baby!" or "Oh, behave!" With the second movie coming out, we did not want to miss the opportunity to do some cool stuff. I hope you'll like our special Austin Powers movie preview insert, bagged with this issue. It's shagalicious! I'm sure there will be more on the International Man of Mystery in the future, because there are rumors that an Austin comic book is in the works.

There is a trend in the comic book world that, each month, gets bigger and bigger: licensing properties for comic books. It's getting hot—Brian Pulido has the WWF comics; Todd McFarlane has Houdini, KISS and The Crow; Avalon Studios has the Wu-Tang Clan; Dark Horse has Star Wars, Buffy and a few more we know about, but can't mention yet; Viz has Pokémon. I don't remember if there was ever a time that so many licensed comics were in our "Top Ten." All this leads to one thing—more fans. This is a great way to bring in fans who enjoy characters from other media. Whether it's from movies, TV, video games or the Internet, if it's exciting, there should be a comic book about it.

As for this issue, we follow the great Spawn creator Todd McFarlane around for 24 hours as he shows off his collection of Mark McGwire home run baseballs. He even meets Howard Stern and Ozzy Osbourne! We've also got great features on why 1999 is the year comics will rock, the dirt on the Spider-Man movie (Which is finally coming!), and a look at screenwriter/director/*Daredevil* scribe Kevin Smith's brand-new comic store!

We also have one of the greatest #1/2 comics ever: *Star Wars*! Don't miss our offer! This is going to be one of the biggest movie premieres ever!

See ya!

Gareb Shamus

P.S. Don't miss our Web site at www.wizardworld.com for daily news and market reports.

MASTHEAD

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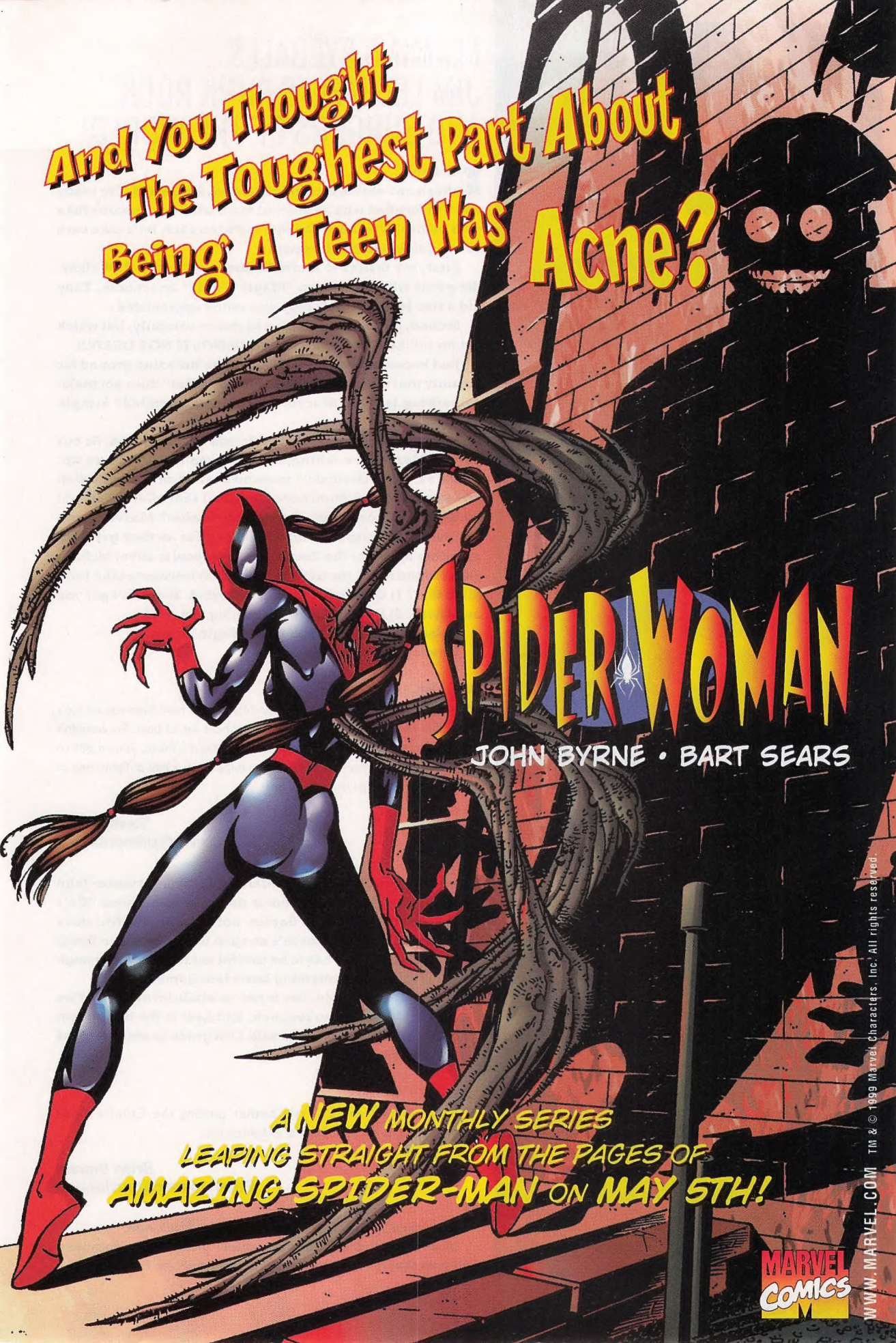
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MAGIC WORDS

FLAMING EYEBALLS... JIM LEE MEETS PUNK ROCK... AND BURGERS OF THE WORLD!

I'm back.

After a one-month break, I'm tanned, I'm rested, I'm ready and I'm fortified with 30 percent more wise-ass remarks than ever before! Woo-hoo! That having been said, let's take care of two quick items of business:

First, my thanks to André D. Shell and James A. Walker, the goons who filled in on "Magic Words" last month. They did a fine job, and their help was much appreciated.

Second, please read the next sentence carefully, but watch out for all the capital letters: *DEADPOOL* IS NOT DEAD!!!

Just because rumors whirl about the breeding ground for insanity that men have dubbed "the Internet" does not make something true. Is Marvel's *Deadpool* canceled? Simple answer: No.

Still, it's not the healthiest title you're gonna find. So our pals at Marvel are taking steps to prop the 'Poolman up. There's a "Save *Deadpool*" movement afoot on Marvel's Web site (www.marvel.com/savedeadpool) that offers discount *Deadpool* subscriptions. And ya know what? Marvel's getting twice the response through this offer as they get from any other ad. So for the time being, *Deadpool* is alive, kickin', and making much merriment. Your dual lessons to take from all of this? 1) Quit being so damn morbid. It doesn't get you anywhere. 2) Don't believe everything you read.

Unless, that is, you read it in "Magic Words."

Onward and upward....

Dear Jim,

I don't get it. Why does DC's Martian Manhunter have heat vision? He's vulnerable to fire. And fire is basically a whole lot of heat. So wouldn't he be killing himself just by using his heat vision? I mean, you've got to figure his head or eyes are just going to explode in a ball of flame one of these days if he keeps using it. Right?

Steve Taylor
stevet@primenet.com

Wrong. According to *Martian Manhunter* writer John Ostrander, heat vision is no problem because "He's vulnerable only to flames, not heat. An electric stove is pretty hot, but there's no open flame, so it's no threat to him. He only has to be careful not to generate enough heat to make something burst into flame."

And, by the way, fire is not "a whole lot of heat." Fire is a rapid oxidation reaction, and heat is the by-product of that reaction. Who ever said 11th grade chemistry class would never pay off?

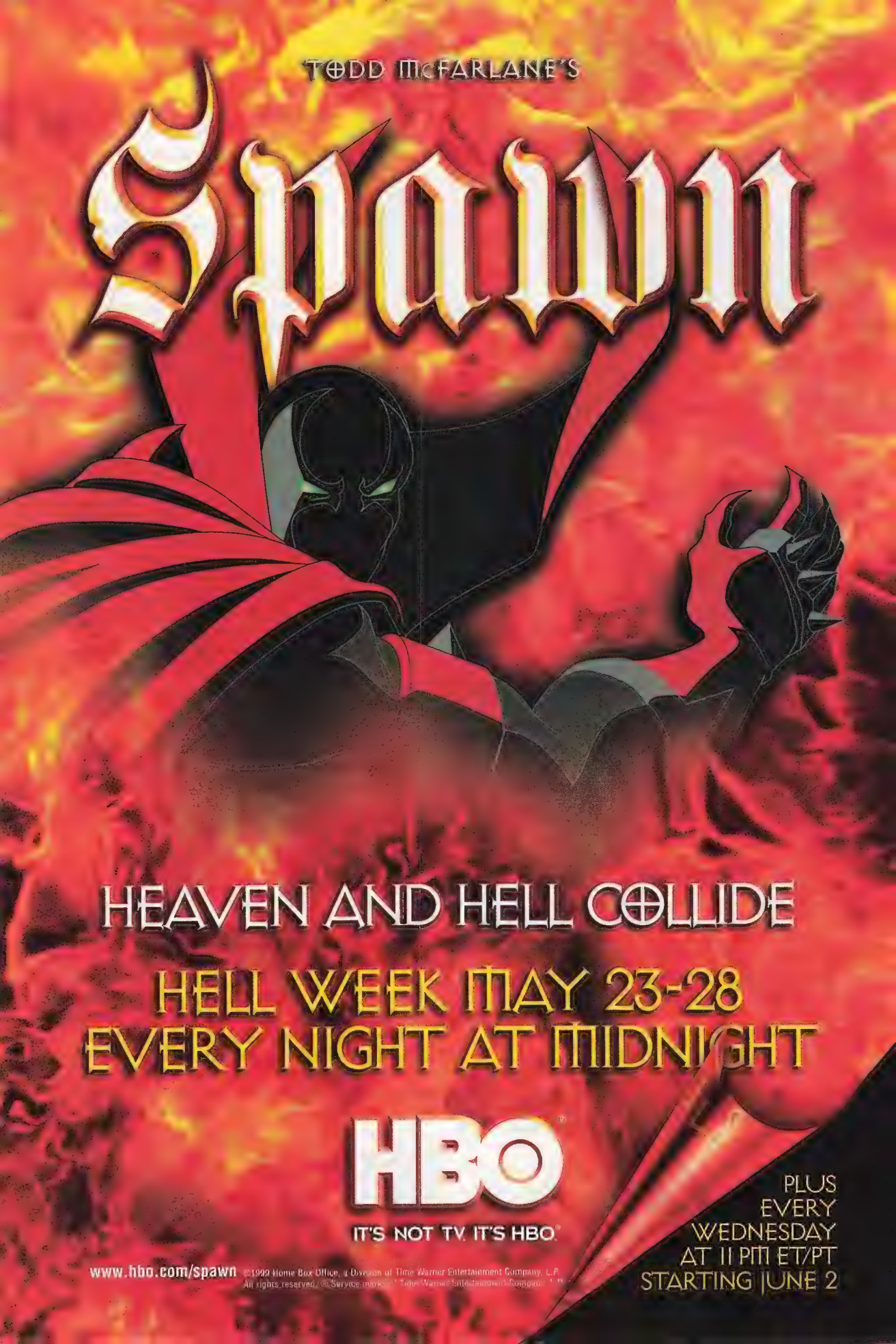
Jim,

Why do Marvel and DC still bother putting the Comics Code Authority stamp on their books? Enlighten me.

Brian Ingram
Brian_Ingram@baylor.edu

Two reasons: philosophy or practicality. Pick one.

Marvel takes the philosophy road. "Marvel as a company believes that its comics should be appropriate for readers of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BUNNY AWARD

Jim takes his favorite letter and spotlights it here. There's no logic attached to this, nor is there a prize.

Dear Wizard,

My girlfriend is a huge comic collector—bigger than I. And the love o' my life loves stretchable heroes like Plastic Man and Mr. Fantastic. But the problem is that there don't seem to be enough females with that power. Could you guys please do an article about flexible female heroes? She would really love it.

Holden Samuel
Charlotte, NC

When Elasti-Girl alone just won't cut it, people turn to "Magic Words."

Hmmm. Stretchable male heroes. "Flexible female heroes." Are you sure you and your girlfriend are reading the right magazine? You might want to try something else to find out more about your...um...interest. Might I recommend something in the "sophisticate" section?

all ages," says spokesman Bill Rosemann. "We want to thrill readers', but we don't want to do it through the easy routes of excessive sex or violence."

DC takes a more practical approach. It doesn't bother submitting adult-targeted comics like those in the Vertigo line to the Code. Still, DC does pass most of its superhero and all of its "animated" books through the Code. Bottom line for DC: Code approval is still helpful on the newsstand. Retailers in comic stores know exactly what they're carrying. But chances are, your local grocery store manager has no idea. The Code gives him a constant barometer, and a decent assurance that the Concerned Mothers of America won't storm the local Stop-N-Shop with torches and pitchforks over something Little Johnny saw in a funnybook.

Consider yourself duly enlightened.

Dear Mr. Wizard,

1) Are Cloak and Dagger dead?

2) How many fat grams are in pi?

John Varner
Edmond, OK

1) Nah. According to Marvel Master of Information Bill Rosemann, the mutant duo is still breathin'. "There are currently multiple proposals in circulation around the office to bring Cloak and Dagger back in a new series," Rosemann says. "We're just waiting to pick the right one."

2) 3.14159

Dear Wizard,

Has Sam Kieth fallen off the face of the planet or what? I am a big fan of *The Maxx*, or at least I was until it stopped appearing at the local comic shop. Where's Kieth? Where's *The Maxx*?

Billy Dean
InsaneMime@futura.net

Maxx creator Sam Kieth has only fallen off the face of this continent. He's currently in Europe directing a movie. "Sam is planning on coming back to *The Maxx*, but we don't know when," Image Comics Traffic Director Brent Braun says. "We haven't heard from Sam in a while, so I think it might be 2000 before you see *The Maxx* again."

Yo Jimbo,

What comic work has writer Devin K. Grayson been involved with? Her *JLA/Titans* mini-series was a blast!

Simon Westwell
Blackburn, England

Grayson got her start on 1997's *Batman Chronicles #7*, writing a short story featuring Dick Grayson and Donna Troy titled "Like Riding a Bike." From there, she moved to *Catwoman*, where she wrote issues #54-#71, and the *Nightwing/Huntress* and Arsenal mini-series. And she just finished up the February books in the Batman "No Man's Land" epic.

These days, Devin is writing the *Black Widow* mini-series at Marvel and a *Titans* ongoing at DC. "The Titans rock!" she says. "They represent a very appealing, contemporary version of a family—they're all close friends, but not actually related. To me, they're closer than a family, because they choose to stick together."

Dear Gentlemen,

How long does it take to make a cartoon like "The Batman Adventures"? Does it take longer to make a cartoon or a comic book?

Imad Zaheer
Rego Park, NY

Let's ask someone in the know. Paul Dini is co-producer of "The Batman Adventures," an occasional comic writer and he's fun on dates. So he oughtta know what he's talkin' 'bout. "From script to storyboards to animation to production to the time you see it on air, five months is the shortest time we've done an episode in," Dini says. "Eight months is about normal."

BUNNY PHOTO: PAUL SCHIRALDI.

HEY! IT'S PEN PALS...

Send your name, address, age, sex and three favorite titles to Pen Pals, c/o the "Magic Words" address at the end of this column (put your age on the envelope). The only way to get your Internet address listed instead is to post your info in the Pen Pals board on America Online's "Wizard World" forum (keyword: Wizard; look in the Wizard Bulletin Board, under Message Boards). **Pre-'98 entrants:** Please resend your entries.

For comics, Dini says it takes about four months from initial plot to hitting shelves for normal people. "But I'm not normal people," he says. Dini collaborated with artist Alex Ross on 1998's *Superman: Peace on Earth* tabloid-sized one-shot and plans a similar Batman project with Ross in '99. "On these, it's a full year in the making. We go back and forth on the story idea, then Alex does thumbnail sketches of the art, then we refine from there."

Of course, it's not like Dini spends all his time slaving over a hot drawing board. "I've never really timed myself," he says, "but I'd guess I probably put in about 40 hours of good, concerted effort for either a cartoon episode or a comic."

Dear Jim,

Just finished reading the entire run of Eclipse Books' *Miracleman* (#1-#24) and it was definitely one of the best things ever done in comics. Really superb.

Anyway, I'd heard a rumor that writer Neil Gaiman and artist Mark Buckingham had finished a *Miracleman* #25, but it was never printed and the original artwork was returned to Neil and Mark. Will we ever see *Miracleman* #25 somewhere? And whatever happened to Todd McFarlane's purchase of Eclipse?

Jonathan Michael Baylis
AlchemyJMB@aol.com

The rumors are true: "*Miracleman* #25 exists," says Mark Buckingham. "It's written, penciled and inked. I even started on #26 and have the first eight pages penciled." But back in 1988, between #24 and what would have been #25, financial difficulties at Eclipse led to the suspension of *Miracleman*. Nothing's been published since.

Todd McFarlane Productions, which purchased the Eclipse assets a few years ago, currently has plans only for a new *Black Terror* series among all the Eclipse properties. But *Miracleman* might someday see new life. "Neil has been negotiating on and off to acquire *Miracleman*," Buckingham says of Gaiman. "One of these days, we hope to get it up and running again."

Dear Jim,

I'm in a Miami-based punk band called "Fanboy." One of our songs contains the lyric, "She stole my heart as if it were Jim Lee's bathrobe," in homage to the fact that you guys steal Jim Lee's robe every year at the San Diego con. I'm a huge fan of comics and a huge fan of *Wizard*. So can Fanboy be the official band of *Wizard*?

Matt Cadrette
Hollywood, FL

Anyone who likes to heckle Jim Lee is okay by me, so the answer is "yes."

ROBERT SHOKA	JOHN W. REAMS	MARYAM RASOULIAN	MIKE BLAKE
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By the way, a few assorted staffers here have tried to put together a band called the "Poogtastics" (named for Poog, the floating head character from *Akiko*), but they can't get off the ground, largely 'cause they're too damn lazy and have no drummer. Provided you guys can play "Lola" by the Kinks, "The Greg Orlando Homesick Blues" and "Bunny For Nothing (And Chicks For Free)," Fanboy is in.

Dear Magic Words,

I have been a very verdant reader of your magazine for two years.

Why are comic readers called "fanboys" when there are women (albeit few) reading comics also? Perhaps we should all get our collective head out of the toilet and come up with a new title.

Robyn Solley
raven_goddess69@yahoo.com

Not a bad idea—unless you're a punk band from Miami.

Replacing "fanboy" is a lot like the weather—everyone talks about it, but no one seems to do anything. So listen up: Send your possible "fanboy" replacements to "Magic Words." We'll see what we get, and I'll run the best ones in a future column. Who knows? We may come up with a new term that'll catch on.

And by the way, "verdant" means "covered with green growth." I've got a nice ointment that I'll be sending your way that'll clear that right up for ya.

Hey Jim,

Being that Chaos! Comics is doing a comic about the Undertaker, why don't they do a comic about *my* favorite WWF superstar—Mick Foley, a.k.a. Mankind?

John Donahue
Oscoda, MI

They already are. Mankind will be part of the Undertaker cast. Writer Beau Smith tells us that things will start out slow for Foley, but by *Undertaker* #3 (hitting in May), Mankind will be a major player.

Dear Jim,

Does the Bunny get more chicks than you do?

Neall Bertram
diamand@frontiernet.net

Unfortunately, yes. But all his "chicks" have cottony tails, pink eyes and twitchy noses. The only bunnies I hop after are beach or snow bunnies.

G'day Jim,

1) Are there any plans for more *Cyberforce* from Top Cow?

2) What, if any, progress is there to report on the "X-Men" movie?

3) Where can I get one of those cool Galactus costumes like you guys had in "Galactus Eats *Wizard*" from *Wizard* #85?

Roger Pilton
kirath@ozemail.com.au

G'day, yourself.

1) Nope. According to Kate Sherwood, the Cow's sales and marketing director, "There's nothing on the horizon right now. But in comics, nothing's ever concrete."

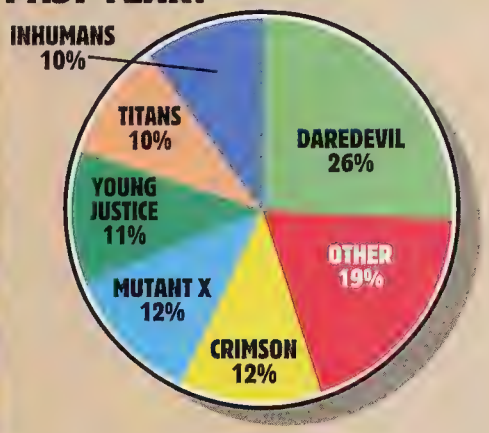
2) It's being casted. Check "Coming Attractions" every month for the latest news. If it's news, it's there.

3) From the FUN-Ghoul Costume Co. of Rutherford, New Joizee. Call 'em at (201) 460-1489 and see if they'll

SURVEY SAYS

ONLINE QUESTION OF THE MONTH

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE BOOK THAT'S DEBUTED OVER THE PAST YEAR?



We wanted to know what you thought was the cream of relaunches in the past year, and never has a lawyer been so loved.

Fans who responded to an online poll (www.wizardworld.com) chose the *Daredevil* relaunch, written by Kevin Smith and illustrated by Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti, as their favorite of the new books. "The clean art and kick-ass storytelling make it the best," claims one fan.

Other books came in a big ol' pile, with *Young Justice*, *Mutant X* and *Titans* grabbing 10- to 12 percent of the vote. Voters choosing these as their faves cited the interaction between the ensemble casts as the main reason for their popularity.

***Inhumans* garnered a whopping 10 percent of the vote—as a write-in. "I like it because it's the first of these 'new' books to make me like characters I never cared about," said one voter. ■ NACHIE CASTRO**

MARIAN WHALEN
Age: 13 Sex: F
RR2 Box 215
Holmes, NY 12531
Likes: *Bone*, manga and anime, Apollo Smile

BRIAN LYTLE
Age: 21 Sex: M
P.O. Box 664
Sweet Home, OR 97386
Likes: *Mutant X*, all *Spider-Man* titles

MONA AVILA
Age: 22 Sex: F
P.O. Box 2602
Niles, CA 94536
Likes: *Spawn*

YANKO F. TAPIA ALMONTE
Age: 14 Sex: M
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Tampa, FL 33603-5609
Likes: *Battle Chasers*, *Top Cow titles*, *Crimson*

ADAM DOUGLAS
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3007 SW 8th Street
Bentonville, AR 72712
Likes: *Green Lantern*, *Pokémon*, pretty much every DC title

ADRIANA BAXTER
Age: 19 Sex: F
4409 Clifton Ave.
El Paso, TX 79903
Likes: *Sailor Moon*, *Deadpool*, *Generation X*

DENNIS SALVATIER
Age: 20 Sex: M
18719 Del Bonita St.
Rowland Hts., CA 91748
Likes: *Bat-titles*, *Daredevil*, anything by Alex Ross

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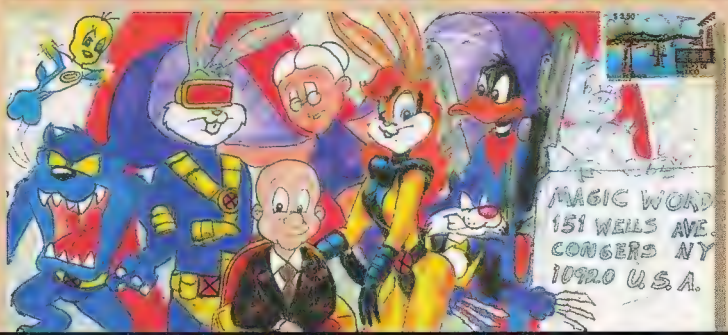
LETTER ART

Each fan who has letter art printed this month will win a signed copy of *Ghost* (vol. 2) #3 signed by creators Chris Wagner, Christian Zanier and Steve Moncuse, plus a spanktastic copy of this issue of *Wizard* signed by the entire *Wizard* creative staff! The super-spectacular winner of this month's best envelope scores an original page of artwork from *Ghost* (vol. 2) #3, plus a signed copy of that issue and a signed *Wizard*. (Thanks to Dark Horse Comics for these wonderful prizes!) Artists: Please include a clearly printed return address and a list of characters depicted on the back of your envelope. Good luck!

ENVELOPE OF THE MONTH.....THE PRIZE

BEAVIS AND SUPERGIRL Ed Ruppel Hazelwood, MO

THE THING Joshua Herbolsheimer Omaha, NE



LOONEY X-TOONS Israel Robles Guadalajara Jal, Mexico

EVIL ERNIE, LADY DEATH Donny G. Kusma Surbaya, Indonesia

make you one. But be advised—the Galactus togs were an expensive custom job that we shelled out big bucks for. Then again, we can afford to do things like this. We're still livin' off all those juicy Image and Valiant kickbacks we were gettin' in 1993.

Hi Jim,

I have a type of burger in my country named "El Chino" that has the same flavor that the "White Castle" burger of your country has. The El Chino is bigger than your White Castle, but the people in my country don't appreciate it. Would you like to increase your commercial relations with Ecuador?

Juan Carlos Gilbert
juangilbert@usa.net

Deal! Provided no international treaties over the import of hazardous materials are broken, you've got yourself a swap. Just make sure there's no relish on your burgers. I hate that stuff.

Salutations, Jim,

I'm getting married next year—June 10, 2000 to be exact. I'm wondering if you have any good ideas.

Greg Streuly
Brodhead, WI

How 'bout, "Don't get married?" Aside from that, I think it would be a good idea to redesign turkeys so the bones aren't in there all wrong. I also think a Todd McFarlane-to-English dictionary would be a good idea. I got lots of good ideas.

Another good idea? Ending this column on a high note. It's good to be back. So until next month, remember always that I remain...

—Jim McLauchlin

Performing on a stool, Wizard Senior Staff Writer Jim McLauchlin has a sight to make you drool: seven virgins and a mule. Keep it cool, keep it cool.

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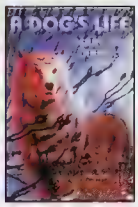

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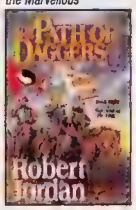

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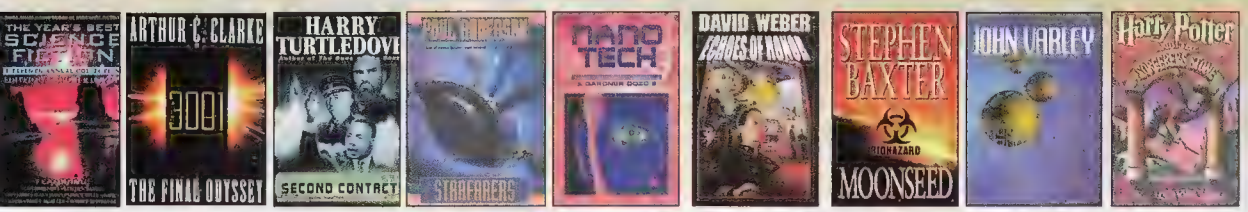

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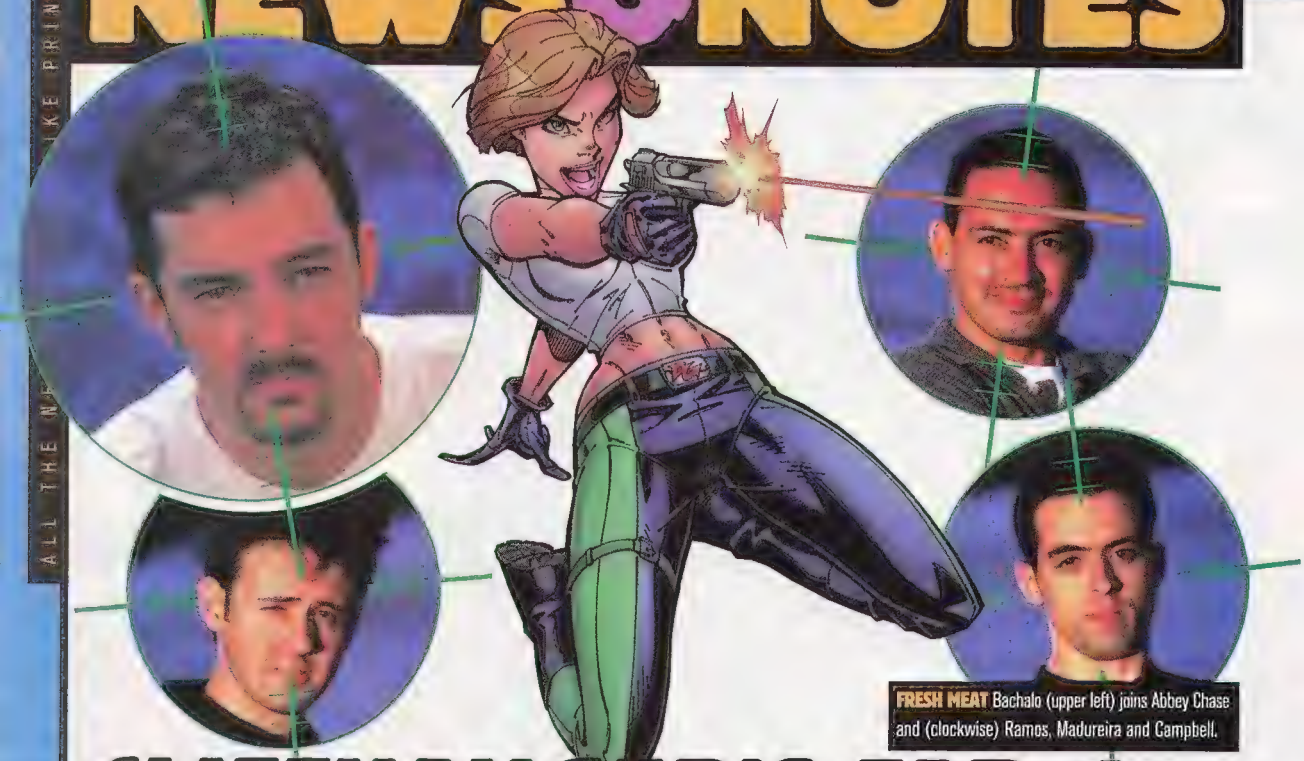


FRESH MEAT Bachalo (upper left) joins Abbey Chase and (clockwise) Ramos, Madureira and Campbell.

CLIFFHANGER'S FAB 4

Bachalo joins Cliffhanger line, book slated for end of year

The Cliffhanger trio of J. Scott Campbell, Joe Madureira and Humberto Ramos has become a fantastic foursome.

Cliffhanger, the ultra-hot publisher of creator-owned comics such as Madureira's sword-and-sorcery *Battle Chasers,* Campbell's spy epic *Danger Girl* and Ramos' horrific vampire series *Crimson*, expanded its ranks, adding artist Chris Bachalo to the mix in late March. A new title created, penciled and co-written by the former *Uncanny X-Men* artist will launch by year's end.

Since its inception in 1998, Cliffhanger has carved a powerful niche in the comics market, attracting legions of fans and garnering high sales on all of its titles. When the Cliffhanger books launched in March, April and May of 1998, all three smashed into the top 100 list of monthly comic sales at 15th place or better, with *Danger Girl* #1 plowing into the top 10 at number five.

Bachalo's admittance into this exclusive club marks the first time Cliffhanger opened its doors to a new creator. "He's going to be a great addition to the three of us and what we have going on," Campbell said. "I think he fits in perfectly."

"I'd like to think [Cliffhanger] chose me because I have a distinct and unique style as a different voice from what you see in the kingdom of comics," Bachalo said. "I'm somebody that has a good track record of being reliable; I think they were looking for somebody that was going to deliver on a regular basis."

The Cliffhanger trio had planned on making Bachalo a charter member of the line, but his duties on *Uncanny X-Men* prevented him from making the leap. When the veteran artist bid farewell to Marvel's mutants, Cliffhanger pounced.

"Something we've done in Cliffhanger so far is, each individual creator's properties are so vastly different from the other guy," Campbell said. "I think Chris' idea is continuing that trend."

Bachalo's idea, for the time being, remains a closely guarded secret. Bachalo refused to divulge specifics regarding his new project, saying there were some legalities he needed to iron out. The book's title and plot, therefore, remain a mystery, but Bachalo did describe the comic as an "industrial, gothic, sci-fi, action-adventure love story." A mysterious, high-profile creator—one who's done work for both Marvel and DC Comics—is slated to co-write the book.

Bachalo plans to release a preview of his new comic this summer and then tag team in September with *Superman for All Seasons* writer Jeph Loeb on the supernatural-themed mini-series *The Witching Hour* for Vertigo Comics. *Hour*, a three-issue series, sees completion in November; from there, Bachalo aims for a January 2000 release for his new book.

"What you can expect from me and my project is going to be much different than what everyone's seen before as

far as comics are concerned," Bachalo said. "The subject matter is going to be different. I think [the readers] are going to see characters in situations and scenarios that haven't quite been seen before."

The addition of Bachalo to the Cliffhanger imprint comes at a critical time for the WildStorm Comics line, as Campbell's *Danger Girl* and Madureira's *Battle Chasers* have been plagued by chronic lateness. Campbell, however, denied that the addition of Bachalo was done to draw attention away from Cliffhanger's erratic publishing schedule.

"Chris is a very consistent, regular, dependable artist, and actually we could use a few more of those at Cliffhanger," Campbell said jokingly. "I think Humberto has pretty much made the rest of us look good by putting his books out so regularly, and I look forward to Chris making us look good in that department. I think Joe and myself have some things we could still learn about getting a book out more regularly."

Bachalo concedes, however, that he won't be able to put a new book out on a monthly basis.

"I'm not going to pretend I can do 12 monthly issues a year," he said. "That's impossible for me. So I'm going to do a series of story arcs. The first is six issues long, then we'll probably do a collected edition so there's a constant presence. Then a month or two off, and the second story arc, which will start with #7. I'm not interested in doing new #1s in a first mini-series, a second mini-series and so on."

Throughout it all—and despite the lateness curse—optimism reigns in the Cliffhanger camp.

"I know when Joe and Humberto started doing their own creator stuff, I thought I had seen their best work," Campbell said. "Then when I started seeing what they put into their own ideas and their own creator-owned books, I realized that we were only seeing the tip of the iceberg. I look forward to that with Chris. I think we're going to see some eye-popping stuff." ■ GREG ORLANDO

Millionaire visionary Todd McFarlane completely loses grip on reality. "So...how much for your balls?" asked entrepreneur before eating a live salmon.

Lines for "The Phantom Menace" voted worst-smelling of all time. "And you thought we smelled bad on the inside," quipped obese Jedi.

Fan wins local costume contest, is trapped and dies in homemade suit. "Instead of trying to get all that meat out of there, we're just gonna send in the fire ants," commented local authority.

STORMWATCH

Forecasts call for extended wildness this summer. For its part, WildStorm is gearing up for the season with a slew of special events, team-ups and epic finales to long-running series. Here's a scorecard to help you sort through it all.

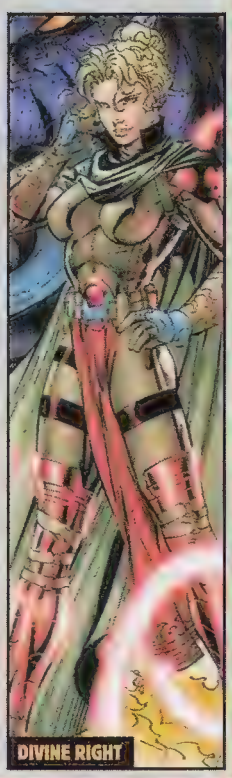
"DIVINE INTERVENTION" Jim Lee's *Divine Right* rockets toward completion this summer with the four-part "Divine Intervention" storyline. *Divine Right* #11 and #12 (which is the series' final issue) serve as bookends for the crossover; the one-shots *Divine Right/Wildcats* and *Divine Right/Gen13* drag both the Wildcats and Gen13 into the madness. Jim Lee will be penciling the *Divine Right* issues and co-writing all four books with Scott Lobdell. The artists for the two one-shots are Carlos D'Anda (*Resident Evil*) and Richard Bennett (*Deathblow/Wolverine*).

GEN13/FANTASTIC FOUR Marvel's elder statesmen the Fantastic Four team with WildStorm's young turks Gen13 in this humorous crossover written and drawn by Kevin Maguire (*Justice League*). The plot, according to WildStorm Group Editor Scott Dunbier, involves the Gen13 teens traveling to New York to chase after their alien mascot, Queelocke–who's both transforming and acting very oddly. *Gen13/Fantastic Four*, Dunbier said, will be out in late summer or early fall.

GEN13 Scott Lobdell (*Wildcats*) will be adding *Gen13* to his ever-expanding plate with September's issue #45, and artist Ed Benes (*Captain Marvel*) will take over penciling duties. "It was a great choice," editor Eric DeSantis said about Lobdell. "He's got the fun infused right back into *Gen13*–where it belongs."

"WILD TIMES" WildStorm celebrates its first "fifth week" event in June with "Wild Times," a series of five one-shot books. "The 'Wild Times' books are our take on some of our characters if they would have existed in other time periods," Dunbier said. "For instance, you have Gen13 in the '60s, sort of a 'Mod Squad' kind of thing."

As an added bonus, all the "Wild Times" books–*Gen13*, *Deathblow*, *Grifter*, *Wetworks* and *DV8* will feature brief cameos by DC Comics characters. ■ GO



DIVINE RIGHT

STORM'S COMIN', MA! GIT THE KIDS AND HEAD TO THE CELLAR!

J. SCOTT CAMPBELL, JOE MADUREIRA, HUMBERTO RAMOS PHOTOS BY JOHN W. MCDONOUGH. ALL OTHER PHOTOS BY PAUL SCHRADER.

SPAWN OF THE FUTURE

'R-rated' Spawn title to hint at upcoming movie plans

As if living in an alley and having hamburger for a head wasn't bad *enough*, Spawn is getting even scuzzier in a new ongoing series.

Only three months after the debut of the medieval-styled *Spawn: The Dark Ages*, Todd McFarlane Productions is readying a darker series that could hint of Spawn's future. "This book will be what Spawn will be like in his future movies," writer Paul Jenkins (*Inhumans*) said.

Jenkins is joined by penciler Dwayne Turner (*Curse of the Spawn*) on the new *Spawn: The Undead* in June, as TMP expands with another "urban horror" title. And this title, focusing more on the cinematic Spawn, promises a new, nasty direction for McFarlane's main character.

"Spawn is no longer just a demon who does nice things for no particular reason," Jenkins said. "He has a cause." That cause is doing away with heaven or Hell's influence over people. "Spawn thinks this is not right, and where he sees this influence, he rectifies it. He sees himself as a force of nature, and bringer of balance."

The end result? A different take on Spawn. "It's less a superhero book," Jenkins said. "Horror? Perhaps. But I hope more psychological horror than 'demons with scary fangs.'"

Other hallmarks of *The Undead* include single-chapter stories (each of the first 12 issues are stand-alones) and a harsher tone. Expect cover warnings similar to McFarlane's *The Crow*. "I want to write about more mature themes, so it's not just zombie fist-fights," Jenkins said. Still, Spawn will be very recognizable.

"Spawn is a strong character that people have known for years," Jenkins concluded. "I don't think anyone can fully define him. So this is merely my definition of Spawn."

■ JIM McLAUCHLIN

MY EYES! MY EYES!!! "Oh my God–it's Peter David in a thong! And he's *really* happy to see me!"

THE BUZZBIN

THE INSIDE SCOOP ON THE COMIC INDUSTRY

'HEROES REBORN' AGAIN? Hey, there's a whole universe just sitting there and no one's doin' anything with it! Look for Marvel to do a "Return to Heroes Reborn Universe" event this fall as a series of one-shots. And look for writers such as Chris Claremont (*Fantastic Four*), Joe Kelly (*Deadpool*) and Fabian Nicieza (*Gambit*) to be involved.

ONCE IS NOT ENOUGH! Prodigal son Rob Liefeld has already returned to the pages of *Cable*. And well-placed Marvel spies tell us that Liefeld also has a revamp proposal for *X-Force* in circulation.

LIEFELD

VILLAIN MAKEOVER! Speaking of *Cable*, the nasty-bad Apocalypse will be wrecking havoc late in the year in the title. But word is, he'll get an all-new look first, just in time for the new millennium.

'AQUAMAN' DIVES! Citing the ever-popular "creative differences," writer Erik Larsen has let slip that October's *Aquaman* #62 will be his last issue on the title. But weep not for Larsen–he's still got three monthly books to keep him busy.

DIVINE SPINOFFS! With the news that Jim Lee's *Divine Right* ends with #12 also comes news that *Divine Right* spinoffs are in discussion–but none involving Max Faraday, the series' main character.

ONI SHAKEUP! Bob Schreck, co-founder of small-press sensation Oni Press, has flown the coop to become a DC editor. Schreck has creator friends who may move with him. But Oni's crown jewel, Kevin Smith, is staying put with *Clerks* and Jay and Silent Bob at Oni. "We've got our history there and everything's been great," Smith said. "But it's kind of nice now, having a man on the inside with DC."

EXTRA GENTS! The 19th century never looked so good! Now that writer Alan Moore's *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* is a certified hit, WildStorm has whispered that it'd welcome a sequel to Moore's tale of 19th-century literary characters.

we looked it up

WHO? WHERE? WHY?

WIE•RIN•GO *(wir RING gô), Michael Lance (Mike), proper noun, 1963-present* 1 Penciler and co-creator of *Tellos*, a new sword-and-sorcery ongoing series from Image Comics 2 Former penciler of *Sensational Spider-Man*; known for his energetic, dynamic, action-oriented style 3 What a woman who's just lost her wedding ring down the drain while doing dishes might ask.

ROB LIEFELD PHOTO BY: PAUL SCORDALIS, MIKE WIERINGO PHOTO BY: JEFF SMITH.

CAT'S MEOW

'Playboy' playmate Baggett's comic is simply purr-fect

ALLEY BAGGETT PHOTO BY BRUCE BROWN

CAT IN HEAT Readers will lap up Playmate Alley Baggett's *Alley Cat*.

News flash! More shocking evidence that comic book readers are mostly male!

Playboy Playmate Alley Baggett has reached an agreement with Image to produce a series based on her likeness. Titled *Alley Cat*, the New Orleans-based story has Baggett coming in contact with a leather suit that, when worn, invokes strange flashbacks to 19th-century Paris and leads to danger in the present day.

Since her debut in 1995, Baggett (also soon to be an action figure) has proven to be one of the more enduring Playmates, and is often referred to as one of the most downloaded women on the Internet. Scribe Matt Hawkins has faith in Alley's cross-appeal. "Alley will bring in a ton of new fans who wouldn't otherwise read comic books," he said. "Hopefully, we can get a few of these guys to become regular comic readers." Groovy. *Alley Cat* #1, by Hawkins, Robert Napton and Bosco (the penciler, not the sauce), goes on sale in July. ■ **JAKE ROSSEN**

BOOM TIME

Awesome Entertainment is so sure that Jeff Matsuda's *Kaboom!* series is worthy of your hard-earned cash, it's gonna give you more of a chance to catch it.

Kaboom! is the manga-inspired story of Geof Sunrise, a lad who stumbles upon a pair of superpowered gloves and soon finds himself in all kinds of trouble. After putting the book on hiatus last year, Awesome now hopes that the creative team of Jeph Loeb and Keron Grant can dispel claims that the original was too juvenile. "It'll still have that high-energy action feel to it that the original book had," Loeb promised.

Matsuda, however, is nowhere to be seen. "He wanted to have the opportunity to work on some bigger icons than his own creator-owned material," Loeb explained, though he added that Matsuda will do some covers. The new *Kaboom!* mini-series by Loeb and Grant, with special variant covers by Joe Madureira, goes on sale in June. ■ **JR**

Issue #2 on sale in June!

As seen on TV

ARCANE

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NEWS&NOTES

AWESOME ENTERTAINMENT

The dark secrets of *The Coven* are revealed in *Coven: Dark Origins* #1, a June-shipping special from writer **Jeph Loeb** and artist Ian Churchill.

LADY DEATH: THE RAPTURE

CHAOS! COMICS

Hello! *Monkeyman & O'Brien* artist **Arthur Adams** does the variant-cover job on June's *Lady Death: The Rapture* #1.

COMIC BOOK LEGAL DEFENSE FUND

The CBLDF presented this year's Defender of Liberty Award to **Brian Pulido**, president of Chaos! Comics. Pulido's efforts earned around $12,000 for the not-for-profit organization. **Joseph Michael Linsner** (*Dawn*) will create an original painting to appear on a T-shirt, the sales proceeds of which will go to the CBLDF. The original artwork will later be auctioned off, and those proceeds will go to the CBLDF also.

DARK HORSE COMICS

Put an end to the **Phantom Menace** in late May when Dark Horse releases the final chapter in the four-part *Star Wars: Episode I—The Phantom Menace*. Dark Horse unleashes a terrific triad of boogerific trade paperbacks in June with ***Madman Boogaloo!*** *Sergio Aragonés Boogeyman* and *Star Wars: The Last Command*.

DC COMICS

Hear ye, hear ye! Writers Chuck Dixon and **James Robinson** and artists Brett Booth and Jose Luis Garcia-Lopez are now DC-exclusive creators. Huzzah!

• America's Best Comics

Promethea is the latest title in writer **Alan Moore's** line. It'll debut in June with the former *Chase* art team of J.H. Williams III and Mick Gray.

• Homage Comics

Get wet with creator **Randy Queen** and the *Darkchylde Summer Swimsuit Special* in June.

• Paradox Press

Paradox Press is now the publisher of Scott McCloud's massive and entertaining reference book ***Understanding Comics***. Paradox will also publish the sequel, *Reinventing Comics*, when it's finished.

cont'd →

'ATOM' BOMB DROPS

Casey kicks out continuity, gets gritty with X-Men origin

Sticklers for X-Men continuity, prepare to start screamin'. Joe Casey's gonna throw you for a loop in September.

The *Cable* writer is teaming up with penciler Steve Rude (*Nexus*) to retell the origins of the original teenaged X-Men. The project is *X-Men: Children of the Atom*, a five-issue prestige format mini-series. It takes place before the events seen in the 1963 issue of *X-Men* #1.

So what exactly are Casey and Rude changing? They're doing away with the shiny, happy origins the characters had in the '60s, and setting them in a relevant story for today's X-readers. In *COA*, Scott Summers is no longer the sweater-vest, bow-tie wearin' chum of yesteryear; he's an outcast living in a tenement building. Charles Xavier is younger, and a lot angrier: "He's got a lot of piss and vinegar in him," Casey said. And there's a Ku Klux Klan-type organization out to literally lynch mutants...and using the national media to sway the public in its favor.

But fanboys shouldn't sweat too much. The new origins are there for a reason, Casey said.

"The idea here is to make these teenage characters modern readers can recognize, and put them in a more vital social context," he said. "If you're not a tight-ass about continuity, this story will fit perfectly with the X-Men legend. If you are, it'll generate discussion. That's the best thing about comics—when they get people talking." ■ CHRIS HUTCHINS

GET SMART The X-Men learn good.

FDA APPROVES GAMMA RAY MEAT-ZAPPING

Get ready for those tasty Hulk-burgers

Yet another milestone for the Bill Clinton administration (no giggling, please): the Food and Drug Administration has just approved zapping raw meat with gamma rays.

Yeah, those gamma rays—the same irradiated treatment that turned Bruce Banner's life right onto Misery Lane. Food experts have lobbied for years for the approval that came this past February. The treatment will markedly decrease the chance of dangerous bacteria such as *e.coli* being present in your fast food choices.

"I think that the only thing we have to worry about is if the hamburger meat is starting to turn green after it gets zapped," said Adam Kubert, former *Incredible Hulk* artist and bovine connoisseur. "If White Castle hamburgers are starting to turn green, and not just on St. Patrick's Day, then I will probably think twice about eating them."

"RRARGGHH! Will the fools ever know their folly?" the Hulk mused when asked of his opinion. "Also, I prefer Pizza Hut. So whatever." ■ JR

UNHAPPY MEAL Gamma testing? We'd rather risk *e.coli*.

ULTRON UNLEASHED

Busiek, Pérez return to 'Avengers' with an angry robot in tow

HOLY SPIT! Fear Ultron and his sloppy green loogy.

Earth's Mightiest Creators have returned, and they're wasting no time pitting Earth's Mightiest Heroes against a classic villain.

After a three-month break, Kurt Busiek and George Pérez are back with "Ultron Unlimited" in June's *Avengers* #19, continuing a four-part story that begins with a prologue comic available in *Wizard* #95. Busiek said the killer robot Ultron has been diminished somewhat and he hopes to allow the robot to take his place as one of the top two Avengers baddies. "Here's a guy who wants to eliminate all biological life on Earth," Busiek said, "and generally the best he gets is he attacks the Rose Bowl parade. Now he gets to kill off an entire country for starters."

Busiek also promises a look at the soap opera elements of the villain. "For an emotionless robot," Busiek explained, "he certainly seems to make a lot of family connections."

Of course there'll be no shortage of heroes to throw down with Ultron. So many heroes show up that the Avengers split into teams. Giant Man, Wasp and Wonder Man will join regulars Vision and Scarlet Witch to deal with the demolished nation. Meanwhile, Black Panther joins Captain America, Thor, Iron Man, Justice and Firestar to deal with another scenario.

While Busiek defines Ultron's powers, Pérez refines his look. "It's also nice to do characters not part of the active roster—Black Panther, Giant Man and Wasp," Pérez said. His only gripe? "Damn the X-editors for not giving me the Beast!" To top it all off, fanboys can look for a sexy gypsy dance from Scarlet Witch.

After the Ultron story, Busiek promises an issue focusing on Wonder Man and Vision in *Avengers* #23, and a "big, splashy story" dealing with new villains from *Iron Man* will help the Avengers close out 1999 in issues #24-#25. ■ **TRENT D. McNEELEY**

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2. **www.SciFi.com/store/sw8**
The official Sci Fi store. A huge selection of new Star Wars games, collectibles, toys and more from the name in science fiction!

3. **www.WizardMall.com/sw8**
The top site for comic books. Get rare, exclusive Star Wars comics, toys and more.

4. **www.Figures.com**
Get the latest news on Star Wars toys! The largest selection of action figures you've ever seen from private collections & new releases!

5. **www.Centropolis.com**
Keep updated on Star Wars news at the Gateway for Sci-Fi on the Web. Features a ton of Star Wars links!

• Vertigo
WildStorm's **Jim Lee** is the latest in *Vertigo Impulse*'s stable of rotating cover artists. He'll do #25-#27 from July through September.

HARRIS COMICS
Set out a saucer of milk for *Black Panther* artist **Mark Texeira**, when he tackles the things Panther in June's *Panther* #11/*Venom: Sin* #15.

IMAGE COMICS
• Avalon Studios
Ape #6, in June is a stand-alone story in which Kildare and Pup track down a subway-dwelling beast. **Jay Anacleto** provides the art.
• Highbrow
Hoo-hah! Writer/artist **Erik Larsen** comes up two issues of *Savage Dragon* in June! In *Ape*, the Dragon gets mixed up in [illegible] because we're also [illegible]!
• Top Cow Comics
If a donor stood in's written by *X-Men* alum **Scott Lobdell** in *The Darkness* #25, the Darkness-dude **Jackie Estacado** heads to Las Vegas to find out who owned his identity!

MARVEL COMICS
Silver Surfer penciling legend **Rig John Buscema** has signed on to illustrate the [illegible] *Fantastic Four: The Baxters* mini-series. Look for it in June. Well, makes sense. The original name of Marvel's "tech" line is now "M-Tech." Ain't life grand?

ONI PRESS
Mike Mignola (*Hellboy*) writes *Jenny Finn* #1 (of 4) in June. Set in Victorian London, a mysterious plague leaves the streets. But is Jenny its source, or its victim?

SIRIUS ENTERTAINMENT
June's *Dawn: Return of the Goddess* #1 is available with a signed, numbered, brand spankin' new alternate cover by co-writer **Joseph Michael Linsner**.

DAWN: RETURN OF THE GODDESS

SLAVE LABOR GRAPHICS
Honest to celebrity high-school student **Ariel Schrag** continues her amazing series of her teen years in *Definitely Not Fine* in June.

VIZ COMICS
The pikachuns from Rocket [illegible] a cross a little into **Pikachu** in June's *Pokémon Pocket Monsters Red* #4.

REVVIN' UP HARLEY

Ross and Dini team up for 'Harley Quinn'

Those ruby-red lips. That 1,000-watt smile. Those psychotic tendencies. We could only be describing Harley Quinn, the bouncy criminal who popped up on a regular basis in "Batman: The Animated Series." Until now, though, she's been noticeably absent from regular Batman continuity. That's set to change this summer, when the Joker's main squeeze will debut in the DC Universe in a one-shot written by Paul Dini, aided and abetted by a cover from Alex Ross.

"She's still a doctor at Arkham Asylum, she's still infatuated with the Joker," Dini promised. Dropping in on the "No Man's Land" storyline, "She's not going to be quite as loopy as she is on the show. But she is going to have an edge to her."

As for her costume, Ross noted, "The only thing I augmented at all was to say, 'What is that costume made out of?' My model that posed for me had a latex bondage-type suit on."

Yummy. The *Batman: Harley Quinn* one-shot, written by Paul Dini and illustrated by Yvil Guichet and Aaron Sowd, hits stores this June. ■ JR

CAN'T HARLEY WAIT What's black and white and red all over? A bunch of dead nuns.

THUMBING OFF

THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY

THUMBS UP

'STAR WARS' TRAILERS: Previews for "Episode I: The Phantom Menace" have taken the Internet by storm with nearly one million downloads the first 24 hours they were available. The trailer's been *so* popular, "Austin Powers" and "South Park" knock-offs have popped up, too. We haven't been this pumped since... well, "Return of the Jedi."

'SPIDER-MAN' MOVIE: At last! At long, long last! The Holy Grail of comic fandom is finally within reach after an agreement between Marvel and Sony Pictures. Now if only that Cameron guy would hop on board, we'd *really* be in business.

MONKEYS!: Monkeys are a barrel of laughs–except when they start throwing feces. You can never go wrong with monkeys and the comic industry knows this, with Todd McFarlane Productions' *Cy-Gor* and DC's "JLApe" annuals making this simply a simian summer. One question though: Where's Marvel with a Mandrill revamp?

THUMBS DOWN

MAGNETO RULING GENOSHA: Talk about a cop-out to an otherwise entertaining story. At the end of "Magneto War," the United Nations just hands over Genosha to Magneto–no fuss, no muss. Sure woulda been nice to see Maggie let loose and take Genosha by force.

'HULK' RELAUNCH: Let's see if this sounds familiar: Bruce Banner hits town, Hulk runs around smashing things, Bruce wakes up and feels guilty. Oh, and John Byrne writes himself into the story. So much for "new and different," huh?

'DAWSON'S CREEK' RERUNS: What are we to do without that sad-sack Dawson, that spunky Joey, that saucy Pacey? Uhh...not that we watch that sissy-Mary girl show anyway.

LIONHEART DEBUTS AT WIZARD WORLD '99

Coven creator Ian Churchill has been to the Garden of Eden, and he's brought back a souvenir: *Lionheart*.

The popular artist Churchill will team with writer Jeph Loeb on a new Awesome Entertainment series spinning out of *The Coven*. A *Lionheart Special Edition*, available at July's Wizard World Chicago convention, will precede a three-issue mini-series.

Lionheart features a timeless power that stems from the Garden of Eden, and that power's modern-day wielder—archaeologist Karen Quinn. "The power gives a person abilities that reflect the times they live in," Churchill explained. "In medieval times, it might have manifested as a really kick-ass sword. Today, it manifests as superpowers."

But there's an equal, opposing power, and a villain looking to control both. Enter the conflict. "If one person should have access to both powers, then 'watch out, world' I should think," Churchill warned.

Churchill also promised that even though *Lionheart* means three months off from *The Coven*, he's not forgetting his mainstay. "It's closely tied in," he assured. "Plot threads in *Lionheart* lead directly back into *Coven*, and we introduce a character that will become a main player in *The Coven*." ■ JM

OFF TO SEE THE WIZARD Lions and tigers and boobs, oh my!

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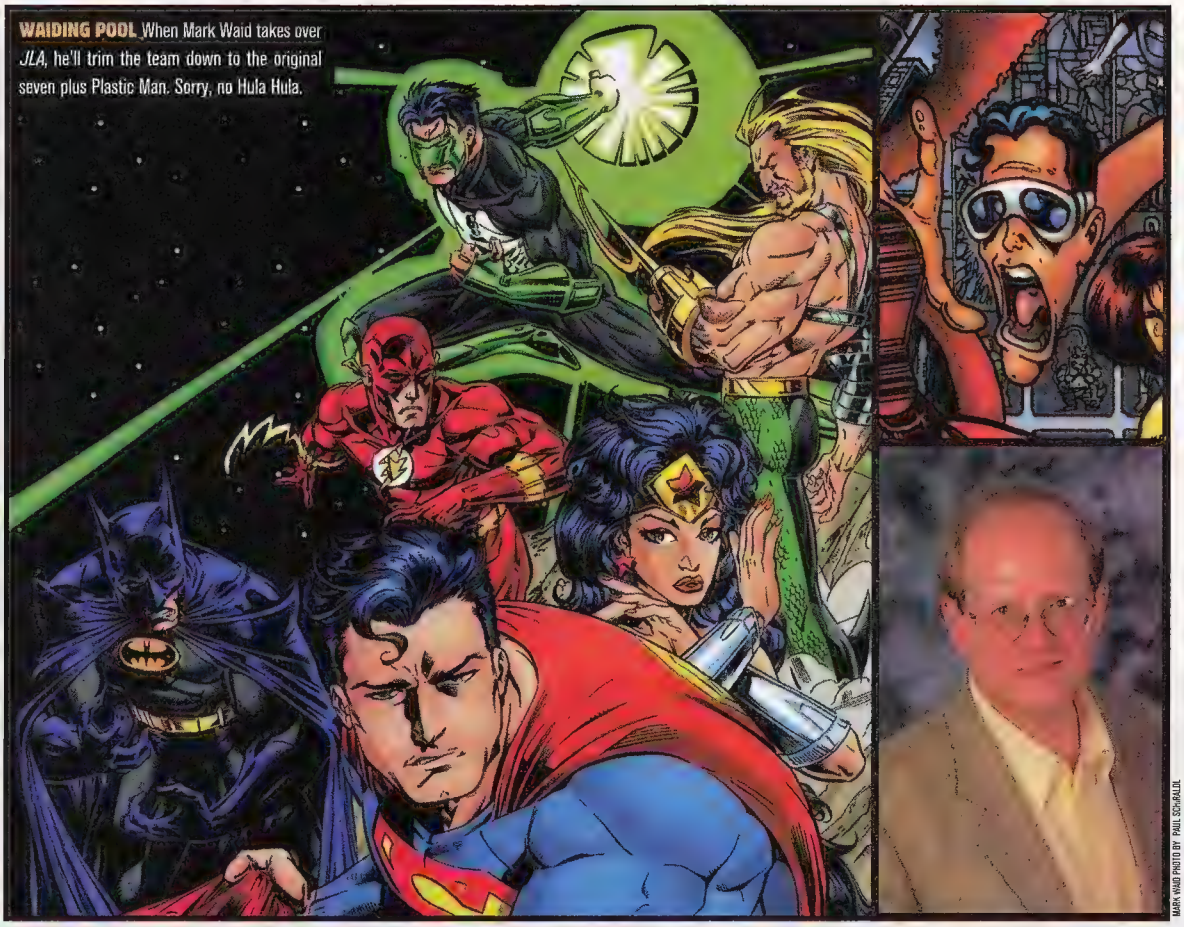
JUST LOOK AHEAD

Smaller lineup, possible Avengers crossover mark Waid's plans



WAIDING POOL When Mark Waid takes over *JLA*, he'll trim the team down to the original seven plus Plastic Man. Sorry, no Hula Hula.

MARK WAID PHOTO BY PAUL SCHRALLE

The waiting game is over.

For months now, fans have known that Grant Morrison, writer of DC's flagship title *JLA*, was ready to leave his post on the enormously popular team book. Expectant eyes turned to Mark Waid, scripter for several *JLA* fill-in issues and 1998's successful *JLA: Year One* mini-series. Now that Morrison's tentatively set to depart with *JLA* #40 (February, 2000), expectation has become realization. It took some convincing, but Waid's in.

"They've been trying to talk me into the job for a year," Waid said. "I kept saying, 'Can't do it, can't do it.' When I took over *Captain America* and *Flash*, there wasn't a whole lot of pressure, but now I'm following one of the hottest acts in comics, and somebody whose talent I have nothing but respect for. But how can you say no to *JLA*? There's no better assignment than this."

One possibility Waid will explore in his new assignment is a long-anticipated team-up between two stellar superteams. "I hasten to say that we haven't included the parent companies in our discussions, but [*Avengers* writer] Kurt Busiek and I were wondering, wouldn't it be cool to do a JLA/Avengers crossover between the two regular, monthly books?" Waid said, gleefully. "The very first inter-company crossover between regular comics! Not a separate mini-series! Frankly, no one's interested if [*Avengers* artist] George Pérez can't draw it, but doing it this way would give George the opportunity, at least."

More immediately, the current *JLA* roster will be halved when Waid comes on in March. Fourteen members presents a huge obstacle. "Remember," Waid laughed, "Grant put 14 guys on the team, and with the very next issue, gave it to me to do fill-ins. 'Fourteen guys, take it away, Mark!' I'm here to tell ya, there *won't* be 14 Justice Leaguers on my book."

Waid will only speculate as to the fate of certain members, given the fact that Morrison has pretty big plans for a few Leaguers before his tenure ends. "Even I'm not sure what all of Grant's plans are," Waid said. However, Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Flash, Green Lantern, Martian Manhunter, Aquaman and Plastic Man will still be there. "I don't think I'm giving anything away by saying that," Waid said. ■ **SCOTT BRICK AND JM**

MAKINGTHECUT

JLA ROLL CALL

HERE'S A LOOK AT MARK WAID'S PLANNED JLA ROSTER:

SUPERMAN: "He's the leader, the one everyone trusts. He's also the conscience of the League."

BATMAN: "He's the brain trust of the group, the master strategist. He's the one you most want at your side when there's a fight."

WONDER WOMAN: "She's a living paradox–the warbringer here to create peace. Just like in *Kingdom Come*, we'll play with that paradox a lot."

FLASH: "No comment. Seriously. It's my book and I'm serious. There's so much stuff happening in *Flash* that it'll all be different in a few months by the time we're all done."

GREEN LANTERN: "He's the point-of-view character for the readers. He's just a regular guy who can't believe he's playing with the Beatles."

MARTIAN MANHUNTER: "Because of his alien nature, he's never a strong leader when there's someone like Batman or Superman around. But he's the best second-in-command and right-hand-man ever."

AQUAMAN: "I'm always scrambling for a way to place him in the story. His royal background is similar to Wonder Woman. So their relationship will be a...subject for examination."

PLASTIC MAN: "I think he's a terrific comedy relief character and a great addition to the group."

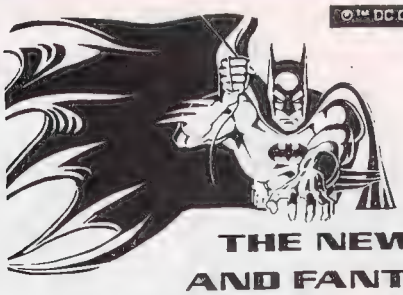
Waid's a proponent of a "revolving door" policy, moving occasional guest-stars into the JLA as their unique skills are required. Here's a sneak peek at who you might see pop up:

STEEL: "I see him as the Tony Stark of the group. I'd love to see him continue to fill that 'technical' role as needed."

ATOM: "It would be cool to bring the Atom in on a case-by-case basis, similar to the way he is now when a hard science guy is needed. He's a much underused character."

ZATANNA: "I'd like to check in with Zatanna from time to time. I know a lot of fans really like her. There's the magic angle, plus she wears fishnets and a top hat. I mean, what's not to like?"

G'NORT: "Not one chance in a million. None at all. You'll see Spider-Man in the book before you see G'Nort." ■ **SCOTT BRICK AND JM**



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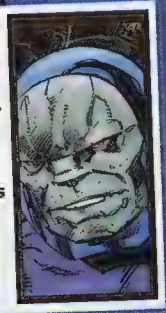


Born on the Saturn moon Titan, the death-obsessed Thanos used bionic implementation and augmented his powers beyond his already Eternal-level. Annihilating thousands (Including his own mom!), Thanos declared himself ruler of Titan, and exists for one reason—to rack up the death toll for his mistress, the female embodiment of Death.

Moments before his brother absorbed his birthright power called the Omega Force, Uxas—prince of Apokolips—betrayed his sibling by seizing the immense power, seemingly killing him. Now known as Darkseid, Uxas assumed control of Apokolips, launched an ongoing war with the world of New Genesis and continually searches for the source of all sentient life in the cosmos.

tha winnah... While surveying his slave pits, Darkseid's attention is caught by a high-pitched shriek. He turns just in time...to be knocked on his ass by a concentrated blast of white energy. Standing above a charred Darkseid is Thanos, grinning from ear-to-ear. Outraged by Thanos' brash attack, Darkseid unleashes a round of Omega Beams at the Titan, who quickly blocks it with a cosmic shield, redirecting the blast to the surrounding slave pits. Furious, Darkseid pulls out his greatest weapon: his strategic mind. Taking advantage of Thanos' aggression, Darkseid leads his foe to the Firepit Energy Processing Plant. There, he pushes the assault until Thanos unleashes all his cosmic energy, triggering a massive explosion. When the smoke clears, out walks a staggering Darkseid, dragging a defeated Thanos—who is now a pet for his sadistic lackey Desaad... (W)

this month's battle drawn by RON LIM and PETER PALMIOTTI

'Wizard' peeks inside Kevin Smith's brand-new comic store

By Jim McLauchlin
Photos by Paul Schiraldi

Most Hollywood types have a little getaway place–a house in the mountains, maybe a yacht. Kevin Smith? He's got a comic store.

But this ain't no ordinary comic store. Smith owns and operates a brand-new 4,000-square-foot comic geek Mecca, complete with props from his movies such as "Clerks" and the upcoming "Dogma." Custom original art by Joe Quesada and Mike Allred adorns the bright walls, colored a shade Smith calls "Superman red and blue." Human Torch-like arms jut out of the walls to hold up T-shirt racks. You can even find the writer/director himself manning the cash register whenever he gets the chance.

Welcome to Jay and Silent Bob's Secret Stash in Red Bank, N.J., the shop which provides a sneak peek at how a 21st-century comic store may look.

"I knew people would love to look at all the cool stuff we've got," Smith says.

Hey, now *there's* an idea! Wipe your feet at the door and let's take a more detailed tour, shall we?

STRANGE, BUT TRUE Jason Mewes, the comic geek and longtime Smith friend who plays "Jay" in all Smith's movies, really acts like Jay in real life. He'll talk nine miles a minute to any customer who'll listen. It's hysterical.

NO FREE RIDES Mewes gets no special discounts. "Tubby bitch makes me pay more sometimes," Mewes complains. "I gotta work part-time here to get store credit."

CAUSE FOR THE PAWS Chuck your change in the jar by the register. All the money goes to Operation Kindness, a local animal shelter. "It's really my mom's cause," Kevin Smith says. "But I'm an animal lover, too." Just ask his two golden retriever puppies: Scully and Mulder.

COMIC 'CLERK

UP IN ARMS Superhero-y arms jut out of the walls to hold clothing racks. So who belongs to this appendage? "Whoever it is, it's *not* the Human Torch," Smith maintains with a wry smile. "Look carefully–he's got a gun in his hand. That ain't the Torch."

REGISTER JOCKEY Come to the Stash and Smith himself might ring up your purchase. When store manager Walter Flanagan's daughter was baptized, Smith filled in at the store. "I worked five hours that day. It was great. Take everything else away, and that's who I am. I love to sell."

GENDER BENDER Shocking, but true! Flanagan's dog, despite all references to his large... uh... "maleness" in "Mallrats" and "Chasing Amy," is actually a girl! Flanagan bought her at the Eden Prairie Mall when "Mallrats" was being shot. Her name? Brodie, same as the main character from the movie.

WINDOW DRESSING "Star Wars" toys line the shelves behind the register. And even though the 12-inch Han Solo with carbonite block is $69.99, it's not completely a security issue. "You can see them right from the street and The Holy Trilogy will always get people in the door," Smith says.

HELLOOOO? "Jay and Silent Bob's Secret Stash" is a bit of a mouthful. So when the staff here answers the phone, they simply say "Comics!"

TURNING JAPANESE Hot Pokémon toys are kept right at the register. "I can't keep the stuff in stock. It comes in and it flies out. The American toys seem to sell faster than the Japanese stuff, though I can't figure why. The only difference is the packaging."

TOP SELLERS No surprise here. Oni Press' *Clerks* and *Jay and Silent Bob* sell like hot cakes. "They're definitely our most consistent sellers. We go through about 2000 copies of each issue," according to Smith. "We sell 10 times on these titles what we do on the X-Men."

FAVE RAVE Between customers, Smith keeps reading material handy. *JLA* is a current favorite. "[Writer] Grant Morrison has done wonders on that book," Smith says. "He writes hands down *the* best Batman in the DC Universe. He's got that character nailed."

PROPPED UP The "Mooby" statue is an actual movie prop. "It's central in a big sequence in 'Dogma.' It's blood splattered because Matt Damon's character goes off and kills a boardroom full of movie executives." Wishful thinking? "It doesn't take Freud to take a peek into that and see what's going on," Smith says.

STICKY SITUATION "Clerks" bumper stickers are a hit item. "We get lots of out-of-state traffic, and everyone wants a souvenir," says Smith. "At $3, it's one of the cheaper items in the store."

THINK SEQUEL This new store is actually Smith's second. He opened this new, expanded store this past February after closing down the store's original site located two blocks away. "It took two weeks to build," Smith says. "We brought in the film crews that did the set design for 'Mallrats' and 'Chasing Amy' to do the place up right."

SECRET I.D. The nickname for Smith's store? He and the crew call it simply, "The Stash."

COUNTDOWN TO WIZARD 2000 ISSUES TO GO

EXTRA! EXTRA! George Carlin (as "Cardinal Glick") is front-page news in "Dogma." "*USA Today* actually does movie prop mock-ups for you," Smith says. "It's better than just getting permission. They do it themselves."

HE'S A TRACER! Mike Allred's (*Madman*) original pencils of "Bluntman and Chronic" from "Chasing Amy" are on the wall. "You can see some darker lines where Ben Affleck was tracing over Mike's work to pretend he was drawing this in the movie."

SACRED COW "Mooby is this children's character who has a Disney-like presence in 'Dogma.'" Smith explains. "We've already introduced Mooby in the *Jay and Silent Bob* comic." Mock-ups of Mooby CDs, videos and fast-food items are ready for display, but still covered. The covers were taken off only for this photo shoot.

HOME RUN The store's lone baseball card? A 1980 Topps Carlton Fisk, not for sale. "A gift from Miramax," Smith says. "They gave this to the actors and producers when production started on 'Good Will Hunting' 'cause there's the monologue in there about Fisk." Smith was an executive producer on the movie.

UNDER WRAPS All the "Dogma" goodies are kept under tarps and will be until the movie's October release. This display in the corner is double-secret. "I gotta hold on to *something* for the release of the movie," Smith laughs. "Otherwise, Miramax [the movie's distributor] might kill me."

HARD HAT Silent Bob's helmet from "Mallrats" is a custom job. "We got a bicycle helmet, and an artist customized it to look like Batman's cowl," Smith remembers. "It's a one-of-a-kind item."

DARK KNIGHT Silent Bob needed something extra to get that Batman feel. "Three feet of extra leather was sewn into the coat for a cape effect," Smith says, "and to compensate for my fat ass, as well."

BEST-LAID PLANS The inside of the display case is lined with blueprints detailing how Jay and Bob were going to destroy a game show stage. They have that genuine blueprint smell, and are available for $12 at the store.

SPIN CONTROL Action figures are displayed on innovative, three-sided spinning racks. "I really wanted to put the movie props up on display, so we've got to maximize floor space," Smith says.

GUEST STAR Yep, that's Flanagan, who had a bit part as "Psycho Fanboy" in "Mallrats." He's Smith's longtime buddy, and now store manager. "I'm a believer in hiring friends," Smith says. "That way, you know no one's stealing from you."

ARMED AND DANGEROUS Robert "Ratface" Holtzman, the set designer for "Mallrats," "Chasing Amy," and "Dogma," designed the store. "Originally, he had planned on using the arms of Vulgar, our clown mascot," Smith says. "But we went for something more comic-related."

CLOTHES MAKE THE MAN Smith's original "Silent Bob" gear from his first movie, "Clerks," is under glass. "I used to actually dress like that all the time," Smith says. "But now that the character does, I stay away from it."

NUMBERS GAME All View Askew hockey jerseys have number "37" on the back. Why? In "Clerks," Dante's girlfriend Veronica had 37...um...let's just call them "previous boyfriends."

DRESS UP No less than 23 different "View Askew" T-shirts are available. Smith's favorite? "I like the Matt Wagner art in circle motif," he says. "We've kind of adopted it as the symbol for the store."

BLURRY VISION The "Mallrats" movie poster shows the "Mallrats" logo if you look long enough. "The one used in the flick actually showed a sailboat," Smith reveals. "If you have really, really great 'pause' on your VCR, you might be able to see it."

HIDDEN TALENTS Banky, the comic inker from "Chasing Amy," did a drawing of the Easter Bunny, Santa Claus and two lesbians to illustrate a point. The original art hangs on the wall, and in reality, it was "Chasing Amy" producer Scott Mosier who did the art.

TRIPLE T Multiples were needed for Mewes' shirt, just like all movie clothing. "We get three of everything in advance just in case something gets ruined," Smith says. "You can't hold up shooting over a stain on a shirt."

FRAME JOB Joe Quesada/Jimmy Palmiotti art of Ash was featured in "Mallrats" and the original is framed here. "This was the first time I worked with the boys. They've got their 'Ash' movie deal with Dreamworks now, but we've got the first Ash appearance in a movie."

SNIFFER'S ALERT Three sets of ripped longjohns were needed for Mewes' costume and he wore all three during filming. So yes, these are game-used undies. "And I don't think they've been washed," Mewes says. "I sure as hell don't do laundry on the set."

IMPOSTOR! Allred did the large "Bluntman and Chronic" art from "Chasing Amy," but the "Interior" pages were actually drawn by Matt Brundage in Allred's style. "Mike was busy with other projects, so he inked the pages. And Laura Allred colored them," Smith says.

Wizard *Senior Staff Writer Jim McLauchlin was persuaded at gunpoint to tell you that Secret Stash stuff is available for order by calling (732) 758-0020 or by accessing www.viewaskew.com.*

AMA

AZING

WITH ITS LEGAL PROBLEMS PAST, 'SPIDER-MAN: THE MOVIE' MAY FINALLY GET MADE

BY TOM RUSSO

Good news, Spider-fans: On March 1, that special corner of hell seemingly eternally reserved for the Spider-Man movie finally froze over. Just one day before Marvel Enterprises was set to go to trial in an effort to end years of litigation over screen rights to the web-slinger, the bulk of the case was settled out of court. Mere months after clawing its way back from bankruptcy, Marvel had taken aim at perhaps its biggest remaining corporate blemish—and Oxy-ed it clean away.

The dispute's sudden resolution was so attention grabbing, the story even rated front-page mentions in both *The Los Angeles Times* and *Daily Variety*, media outlets whose Hollywood-savvy editors aren't easily impressed by this sort of thing. The *Times* went so far as to trumpet Spider-Man as "probably the most popular pulp-fiction figure still unexploited by Hollywood."

"Finally, we are there, we can go make a movie, it's all happening," says Marvel Chief Creative Officer Avi Arad, who has overseen Marvel's Hollywood ventures for the better part of six years and was instrumental in launching the Fox Kids' "Spider-Man" cartoon back in 1994. Laughing, he adds, "I don't feel like a liar anymore!"

The settlement was, in the truest sense, win-win. Marvel scored a major victory, obviously, but so did Sony Pictures Entertainment, one of several parties originally being taken to court by Marvel, but now the studio that will make the movie. In addition, the two established a joint venture to handle merchandising tied to the film, and Sony is also on board for sequels and a live-action TV series. Meanwhile, perpetually struggling MGM, another major studio vying to control the character, settled with both Marvel and Sony.

With Sony's hit-and-miss record of trying to launch "tentpole" movie franchises in recent years—the studio homered with "Men in Black" in 1997, but by most accounts whiffed with "Godzilla" in '98—executives there say that they're intent on putting "Spider-Man" into production as soon as possible. And Marvel appears to be equally intent on holding Sony to its word: Anxious to avoid the didn't-check-the-fine-print blunders of its past Hollywood dealings, Marvel has contractually bound Sony to move quickly. (For further specifics on the settlement, as well as the lengthy history of the rights dispute, see sidebar on page 36.)

But what comics fans of course want to know is: How quick does "move quickly" mean? And the senses-shattering answer to that tortuously burning question is...quickly. Following the flurry of news reports that accompanied the settlement, Marvel reps have downshifted their publicity machine a couple of gears, while Sony has clammed up completely. Amy Pascal, president of Sony production entity Columbia Pictures, declined further comment, as did other development execs dealing with the project. (Sony does, though, appear to be hurrying right along; in its official press release announcing the deal with Marvel, the studio referred to the character as "Spiderman" rather than Spider-Man, clearly more concerned with getting the word out than with poring over Marvel's style manual.) Meanwhile, Arad will say only that the film is "on a very fast track." Still, he adds, "There's an extended treatment [story outline] by ["Titanic" writer/director] Jim Cameron that makes it doable sooner rather than later. When you start from scratch trying to find a creative point of view on how to develop a script, it can take years. This one already has a point of

PETE TV Now that his flick is on the fast track, Spidey counts at least five big-shot actors who'd wanna do it.

SPIDER-MAN PHOTOS BY PAUL SCHRADE; ALL OTHER PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE EVERETT COLLECTION

Cameron's "Spider-Man" treatment has indeed generated considerable buzz

view, and it's brilliant. The man is king of the world for a reason."

Although actually read by very few people, Cameron's "Spider-Man" treatment has indeed generated considerable buzz since he wrote it several years ago—for Carolco, a high-rolling (but now defunct) production outfit that teamed with Cameron to make "Terminator 2." (The treatment eventually landed in MGM's hands and was passed on to Sony as part of the recent settlement.) Touching briefly on his "Spider-Man" plans in a 1994 interview for "True Lies," Cameron spoke of Peter Parker's story as being "like a puberty allegory," with the changes and confusion of gaining superhuman powers mirroring those of adolescence. "The movie ends when the kid [officially] becomes Spider-Man," Cameron said at the time. "Which sounds completely wrong. But in my mind, I call it 'The Last Temptation of Spider-Man,' because he can't be a superhero until he's figured it out."

In one sense, thanks to getting this leg up from Cameron, "Spider-Man" feels like it's just as far along as Marvel's *other* most anticipated movie, "X-Men." Reportedly logging in at a whopping 70 pages (as opposed to roughly 120 pages for a full, feature-length screenplay), Cameron's treatment is so detailed that his office refers to it as a "scriptment." Meanwhile, "X-Men" has gone through no fewer than five major script passes over the past eight years. On the other hand, "X-Men" has a director and is now said to be in the casting stage, while "Spider-Man" is in, well, the *rumored* casting stage. (Jim Carrey? Leonardo DiCaprio? Freddie Prinze Jr.?) Then there's the reality that, no matter how dazzling Cameron's treatment may be, at the end of the day it's still not a finished script.

Intriguingly, there's also now a major question mark surrounding Cameron's involvement with "Spider-Man" beyond his initial contribution. It appears that the filmmaker, who had long professed his desire to stick with the project despite the legal baggage involved, has had a change of heart post-"Titanic." As he himself put it in a recent issue of *Premiere* magazine, "I make a movie every two or three years—it should be something that *I create*. I've always done that, with the exception of 'Aliens'...With the amount of time and energy that I put into a film, it shouldn't be somebody else's superhero."

Cameron has been quoted repeating this sentiment in at least one interview since the settlement was reached, telling a reporter that the movie "was something I really wanted to do eight years ago, when I was first after the project. But your ideas change." In selecting a film to work on now, he added, "you make that decision very carefully, and not just because

DENOREX...TINGLING! With "Titanic" director James Cameron hedging, will the Spidey flick be left to (gulp) the "Godzilla" guys?

SPIDEY'S LEGAL WEB

[illegible]

•**1985** Marvel licenses Spider-Man's movie rights for a reported $250,000 to the Cannon Group, a B-movie outfit that would "produce" movies about video games, "Superman IV"

•**1989** Former Cannon chairman Menahem Golan takes the "Spider-Man" rights with him as part of an exit deal from the company, eventually selling off the property under his own 21st Century Film Corp. Similar arrangements last 21st Century would sublicense the movie rights to Sony and TV exhibition rights to Viacom (today the parent company of Paramount Pictures).

•**1991** 21st Century sells its remaining Spider-Man rights to Carolco, producer of the "Rambo" movies and "T2." Carolco then says Marvel to extend the "Spider-Man" option, and promptly hires "T2" filmmaker James Cameron, for a reported $3 million, to begin developing the movie.

•**1993** Litigation begins among 21st Century, Carolco still claims an interest in the project, Carolco, Sony and Viacom.

•**1994-98** Litigation drags on. MGM enters the fight, having purchased rights from Carolco and 21st Century, both now

everyone wants you to make it."

Sony top brass have reportedly expressed interest in reinvolving Cameron. But Rae Sanchini, president of Cameron's Lightstorm Entertainment production company, confirms the studio's assertion that no substantial discussions have taken place. "We were not part of the negotiation between Sony and Marvel," Sanchini says. "Jim's deal was with Carolco, and their rights expired in mid-'96, so we haven't been formally attached to the project in any way since then. "I don't know if anything would even be possible, given that we have a relationship with [rival studio 20th Century] Fox," Sanchini adds.

Cameron's focus is, to be sure, on several Fox projects at the moment, most notably his first forays into producing material for television. And, as always, Cameron seems to have plenty percolating with his buddy Arnold Schwarzenegger: Cameron has looked at writing, if not directing, "Terminator 3," and the pair have also been eyeing a "Planet of the Apes" remake and a "True Lies" sequel.

There is, of course, always a plan B. Cameron's name may be the one most often mentioned in connection with the Spider-Man movie, but it's not the *only* one. Try this one on for size-does-matter: director Roland Emmerich, who, with writing and producing partner Dean Devlin, made both "Godzilla" and "Independence Day." Having signed a monster production deal with Sony just prior to the release of "Godzilla" last year, Emmerich and Devlin promptly popped up in reports that studio execs viewed the pair as a good match for "Spider-Man." The talk was only logical: These were the newest "Big Men on Campus" on the Sony lot, and the studio was anxious to keep them busy and happy. Even so, a year can be an eternity in Hollywood—and like Cameron, Emmerich and Devlin may now be busy with other projects, including a potential "Godzilla" sequel. There have even been rumblings that they'll do a follow-up to "ID4"—a prospect that for a time seemed unlikely because of a falling out between the filmmakers and Fox, which released the movie.

Beyond that, the speculation surrounding Spider-Man's eventual screen handlers grows even more, well, speculative. It should be noted that Cameron's deal with Fox didn't preclude Paramount Pictures from coming on board "Titanic": To lessen the risk posed by the epic film's equally epic $200 million budget, Fox and Paramount hit on an arrangement, however contentious, for splitting the bill and sharing the profits. So while not the industry norm, deals of this sort aren't completely unheard of—although whether Sony would ever hear of sharing "Spider-Man," even if it meant getting Cameron and/or lessening "Titanic"-size costs, is anyone's guess. Such a scenario does seem unlikely, though.

Still, it can't hurt that Marvel, too, has a far-reaching relationship with Fox—not only on "X-Men" but on planned, live-action versions of "Fantastic Four" and "Silver Surfer" as well. Not long after Marvel's emergence from bankruptcy, there was even some low-frequency buzz that the company's merger with Toy Biz would merely be a precursor to Fox buying the whole operation. And in the August '98 issue of *Premiere*, Fox's head of production was quoted practically salivating over the prospect of getting hold of the wall-crawler. But then again, who wasn't? That's what was driving Sony, too—and that's what got the "Spider-Man" rights so hopelessly muddled in the first place.

But Marvel exec Avi Arad isn't sweating any of this, content instead just to savor the moment. "The most important thing," Arad says, "is that Spidey is out of jail." Now that's the best news Spider-fans have gotten since the end of the Clone saga.

L.A.-based writer Tom Russo hopes lawyers don't halt the D-Man movie.

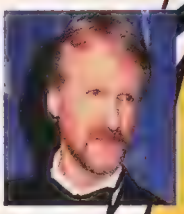
bankrupt. (The Carolco rights include Cameron's lengthy "Spider-Man" outline, or "treatment.") Marvel, meanwhile, introduces arguments that all the rights it had granted to the character have long since expired.

•**February 1999** A Los Angeles Superior Court judge rejects key MGM claims in summary judgment preceding an actual trial, significantly weakening MGM's case.

•**March 1, 1999** A settlement is reached among Marvel, Sony, and MGM. Sony wins the right to make the Spider-Man movie, as well as sequels and a live-action TV series. (Sony reportedly pays Marvel an advance of between $10 million and $15 million for the rights, an amount to be increased depending on the movie's box-office take.) MGM turns over Cameron's treatment to Sony as part of the settlement. Meanwhile, a resolution in Vinson's claim is anticipated shortly. ■ TR

CELEBRITY PLAYERS

KEY PLAYERS IN THE SPIDEY SAGA



JAMES CAMERON: The biggest and most-well-known booster behind the Spider-Man film, Cameron wrote an extended treatment for the project several years ago but has had a change of heart since directing "Titanic." He now claims to be interested only in projects he creates.

ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER: No Cameron, no Arnold. At one time reportedly eyed to play Doctor Octopus, Schwarzenegger will probably not participate in the Spider-Man project, instead opting to team with Cameron on a "Planet of the Apes" remake or potential sequels to "Terminator" or "True Lies."

ROLAND EMMERICH AND DEAN DEVLIN: Director Emmerich and his writing/producing partner Devlin recently signed a huge production deal with Sony, the studio that will make the Spidey movie. Known for big-budget productions like "ID4" and "Godzilla," Emmerich and Devlin may have the inside track among studio executives.

JIM CARREY: Carrey has been rumored for the lead role of Peter Parker, and he has experience playing a comic superhero with "The Mask." However, with a successful dramatic turn in "The Truman Show" and a reported $20-million price tag, the rubber-faced Carrey as Peter Parker may not make spider-sense.

LEONARDO DICAPRIO: "Titanic" golden boy and heartthrob Leo DiCaprio was Cameron's first choice to play Peter Parker when the director was actively pursuing the film; however, with DiCaprio's meteoric rise and Cameron's reported departure, all that may change.

FREDDIE PRINZE JR.: A dark horse for the Peter Parker role, the son of comedian Freddie Prinze has publicly stated that he is a long-time fan of the character and desperately wants the role. But with a body of work that includes "She's All That" and "I Know What You Did Last Summer," Prinze may not have enough box-office pull to nab the lead role.

BEN AFFLECK: Affleck emerged victorious in *Wizard*'s online survey to determine who fans wanted to see play Peter Parker, earning 41 percent of the vote compared to 26 percent for runner-up Prinze. Affleck also has a big booster in director Kevin Smith, who named Affleck as his choice to play Superman in the on-again, off-again Man of Steel flick. ■ TIM PRICE

IT'S BACK!

The return of Wolverine's adamantium headlines a slew of monster events that make 1999 one of comics' best years ever

Forget the Y2K bug.

This year's got tons more going for it than computer glitches and millennium mania. In case you haven't been paying attention, 1999 has exploded into a monster year for comics—and it only gets better as it goes on! Think about it: Decade-old X-Men plots finally resolved. Gotham City ravaged by an earthquake as Batman struggles to keep order. A second Spawn ongoing series starring Al Simmons that's been seven years in the making. Toss in a new Alex Ross project and the destruction of Chaos! Comics' entire universe, and you've got 365 days of comic book nirvana.

"Everywhere you look, there are lots of surprising things happening," says Bob Harras, Marvel's editor-in-chief. "It seems that every week, there's something big happening. And it always sounds cool."

Want more proof that 1999 will make ya wanna dance to that Prince tune? Read on, fanboy—we'll make you Y2K compliant yet.

By D.B. Nicholls and Jennifer Moore

Batman vs. Gotham

Gotham is in ruins. Arkham escapees run wild in the streets. The nation has cut all ties to the ravaged city.

Sounds grim? Maybe for Batman and company. But for our money, the Bat-books' year-long "No Man's Land" storyline sizzles as one of comics' ballsiest events ever attempted.

"This is a kind of story that has never been told in comics before," says Batman Group Editor Dennis O'Neil. "Something of this scope which includes action, adventure, human interest, even social commentary and satire. We know how it's going to end, but how we get there we trust to God and Providence. I don't want to know ahead of time what every beat is; I want to be surprised."

To pull it off, O'Neil and his generals enlisted creators from outside comics to give the Dark Knight a fresh look. Screenwriter Bob Gale (author of the "Back to the Future" franchise), crime novelist Greg Rucka and TV writer Lisa Klink ("Star Trek: Voyager," "Hercules") have jumped on the Bat-bandwagon to help tidy up the decimated world of Gotham City. Even "Batman" animated series producer Paul Dini will contribute to the storyline by introducing the cartoon's clown-girl Harley Quinn to the Dark Knight's comic book rogues gallery.

With talent like that, what does O'Neil plan to do for an encore? "It's time for us to seek out someone to give us the Gotham City for a new millennium."

Whoever it is, bet on it to be ballsy.

NEW MAN'S LAND Will Jim Lee be the Bat-artist of the new millennium?

'The End' for the X-Men

How does the X-Men office get rid of clutter? A sand blaster.

Intent on resolving a half-dozen lingering X-plots in 1999—some of which have been around for over a decade—Marvel Editor-in-Chief Bob Harras and X-Editor Mark Powers wipe one slate clean in order to create another.

"There's a lot of demand to see all of these loose ends get wrapped up," Powers says. "We figured that since it's the end of the century, we might as well take some chances this year and see what happens."

"If you've got a notion of the way things are going, throw it out the window," adds Harras. "It's going to be a roller coaster ride through the X-Men all year."

Harras and Powers didn't waste any time. Within 1999's first three months, the four-year-old mystery behind Joseph, a Magneto look-alike, revealed him to be merely a clone of the X-Men nemesis. And what's next on the docket makes that look almost trivial.

The mother of all dangling plots is ready to be resolved: Wolverine will get his adamantium back, after Magneto yanked it out of his body six years ago. Exactly how remains a glorious mystery.

And that's not all. By year's end in *Cable*, readers see eight years of anticipation end as the self-titled time traveler taps his formidable powers to finally fulfill his mission of stopping the evil Apocalypse from ruling the future. As a part of that future, there will be 12 mutants called "the Twelve" that will stand up to lead the weak. The mysterious identities of this group, first hinted at way back in 1987's *X-Factor* #14, will also be revealed as the year rolls on.

The last two question marks to be answered will be the unrevealed brother of Cyclops and Havok and a cure for the Legacy Virus, which is an HIV-type disease that affects mutants.

Of course, there are still other dangling plots like "Who Killed Graydon Creed?" or what was in Gambit's mystery vial. But there's always next year, right?

D'OH! The X-Men go back in time to the doomed Skrull homeworld just as Galactus hits town.

Spawn: movie style!

"This is the Spawn comic Todd McFarlane's always wanted," says Beau Smith, executive director of McFarlane's comic empire. "*Spawn: The Undead* will get into the dark characterization of Spawn that Todd's been aiming towards all along and will set up the mood for the next movie."

June's *Undead*, the first spinoff starring McFarlane's original soldier of Hell, leaves the superheroic tales to the core *Spawn* book in favor of an R-rated-movie style with gore, profanity and sexuality. But that's not all that separates *Undead* from its sister book. Since Spawn's a being drawn to evil, *Undead* has our pizza-faced anti-hero take to the road, affecting the lives of those who commit evil deeds.

The man dreaming up these evil deeds is rising star Paul Jenkins (*Inhumans*). "It's a splatter fest," says the writer. "But more a splatter fest for the mind. After an issue, your brain should explode against the inside of your skull."

And if hard-core Spawn fans are skeptical of this new direction, Smith promises *Undead* will simply double your Spawn pleasure. "The other Spawn readers are gonna feel rewarded," he says. "This book will not talk down to them. They will really enjoy the hell outta this."

Judgment Day for the JLA?

Grant Morrison thinks big. During his three-year stint on *JLA*, he's pitted Superman, Batman and crew against the forces of Hell and an armada of angels. Now that his tour of duty is coming to an end come 2000, what's he going to do for a finale? "The end of the world," says Morrison.

The writer's apocalyptic "Mageddon War" storyline begins in August 1999 and concludes in January 2000, and Morrison's made no secret that a few team members won't survive it. The story kicks off when Earth falls in the path of Mageddon, an ancient weapon that causes a planet to plunge itself into madness and chaos, promising stakes of universal proportions for DC's premier superteam to overcome.

"There'll be a lot of twists and surprises in the last six issues of the story," Morrison says. "It all culminates where Superman and Batman are the last guys left, alone against the ultimate annihilator."

Regardless of the outcome, the writer insists on going out with a bang. "You can be certain that the carnage will be wide-screen and widespread. If the JLA survives, this will be their ultimate triumph."

DOA Which JLAers won't survive 1999?

Reality Bites for the Avengers

Travelers beware! If Marvel's Avengers don't prevent a space/time catastrophe, well, you might not exist to take that much-needed vacation.

In the 12-issue, time-and-space-spanning epic *Avengers Forever*, where Kang and a group of Avengers take on Immortus for supremacy over reality, the story is rumored to have far-reaching consequences for the Marvel Universe.

"There will be a major change for all of humanity that will affect the Avengers' decisions in how they go about being the Avengers," says Kurt Busiek, writer of both *Avengers* and its *Forever* brother. "There will be major changes for some of the Avengers greatest enemies and one of the Avengers' oldest allies as a result of all this. It's a big, wild finish. It'll have ripples."

As a result of events in *Forever*, expect a new title to erupt from the series' conclusion in September, with heroes yet to be disclosed.

Not that the ongoing *Avengers* series will sit pat. Marvel's hottest non-mutant book, thanks to the surprise consistency of comics' hottest writer/artist team of Busiek and George Pérez, sparks the return of Ultron in June's *Avengers* #19. The revival of the killer android and longtime Avengers foe instigates tons of infighting among the team members (remember: Team founder Giant-Man unwittingly created Ultron, who in turn created the Vision with Wonder Man's brain patterns) and causes the death of an entire country!

"By 2000, the Avengers will be cooking on all burners as Earth's Mightiest Heroes," promises Busiek. "We'll be brushing off the plate and swinging for the bleachers."

Chaos Cataclysm

When Brian Pulido ends a universe, he doesn't screw around.

"Come September 1999, Armageddon will hit the Chaos! Cosmos," says Pulido, editor-in-chief of Chaos! Comics. "By the fourth week of December, the Chaos! Cosmos as we know it will cease to exist."

Starting in September, Pulido himself will write three complete mini-series that will herald the beginning of the end: *Lady Death: Judgment War*, *Evil Ernie: War of the Dead* and *Armageddon*. In this instance, the "Armageddon" isn't only a happening, it's a character as well. Otherwise known as the Father of Fear, Armageddon's arrival on Earth will trigger the signs of the apocalypse. And Evil Ernie, Chaos!'s insane zombie teen who wants global genocide, will be riding shotgun.

Pulido can't wait to hitch a ride, too. "I can assure people that a darker era is coming to [the Chaos! Cosmos]." Darker than the end of the world? "What can I say? We keep finding a new shade of dark."

'X' MEN Thor's a chick? Avengers...robots? Expect *Earth X* to shock ya.

Marvel's 'Kingdom Come'

Alex Ross has seen the future. Twice.

After his 1996 mega-hit *Kingdom Come* told about DC Comics' violent future, Ross conjures his fortune telling to the Marvel Universe in the 14-issue series *Earth X*.

"Everybody you've ever loved in the Marvel Universe is gonna be messed with," says Ross of his future tale. "We're doing everything we've ever wanted to with the characters."

Set 20 years into the 21st century, *Earth X* shows readers a world where a plague transforms every man, woman and child into a superhuman. As a result, says Ross, "The older heroes are lost in this new world; they don't have to protect or safeguard anyone. Order must be preserved, which is the most difficult thing to maintain when everyone has equal powers to them."

And of course there are the ominous questions about what happened to Marvel's familiar heroes. Spider-Man has long retired, shirking his self-imposed responsibility. Captain America, demoralized and defeated, has become a hollow shell of a man. The Avengers carry on as armored, look-alike robots created by Tony Stark in honor of the fallen heroes. Reed Richards, wearing Dr. Doom's green garb, blames himself for the mutation of mankind.

At *Earth X*'s conclusion, Ross and co-creator/writer Jim Krueger hope to make heads spin: "We're going to give a reason why there are superheroes at all in the Marvel Universe," says Ross. "The answer behind all of it [in the last issue] will certainly upset plenty of people. It's gonna be big."

superman sets back to basics

If any *other* DC city needed an earthquake, it's Metropolis. Plagued by bland storylines and a rigid, linked format for the last few years, DC's four Superman books had slipped into a unshakable funk.

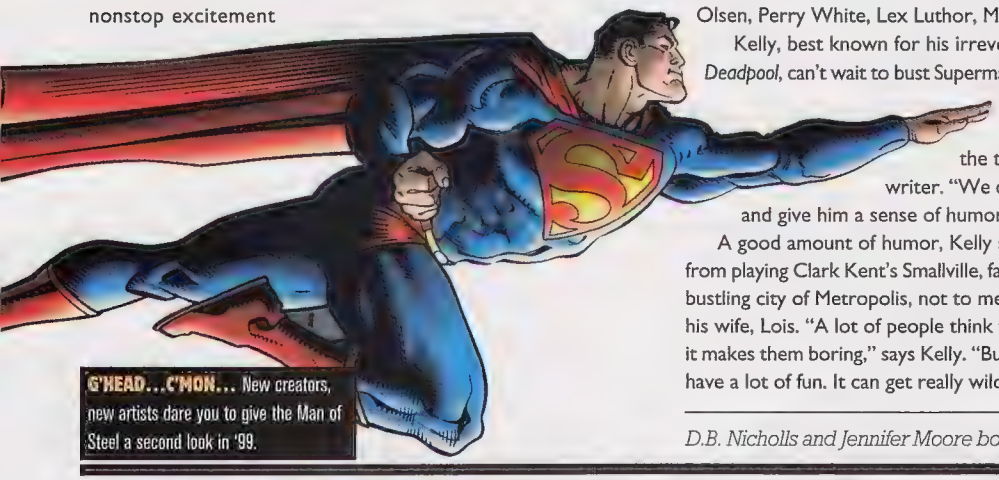
All that is about to change. Come October, high-profile writers Jeph Loeb, Joe Kelly and Mark Millar, with flashy artists Ed McGuinness and German Garcia, hit Metropolis. And expect them to make Gotham-like shockwaves without the property damage.

"If you love superhero comics with big time villains, nonstop excitement and compelling drama, then Superman is the biggest and best of 'em," says Loeb, who got the assignment based on the success of his *Superman for All Seasons* mini-series last summer. "All I ask is give us a chance, 'cause we're gonna hook ya."

Loeb's plan of attack includes villains that'll give Superman a run for his money. "I want each villain to really be a job for Superman. No more bank robbers—he'll be facing guys who could kill him." Also, the supporting cast will be pared down to its core: Lois, Jimmy Olsen, Perry White, Lex Luthor, Ma and Pa Kent and Lana Lang.

Kelly, best known for his irreverent, over-the-top humor in *Deadpool*, can't wait to bust Superman's chops. "Superman doesn't have to be treated like the king of the superheroes all the time," says the former *X-Men* writer. "We can definitely make fun of him and give him a sense of humor."

A good amount of humor, Kelly says, will probably be derived from playing Clark Kent's Smallville, farmboy sensibilities against the bustling city of Metropolis, not to mention the streetwise savvy of his wife, Lois. "A lot of people think that because they're married, it makes them boring," says Kelly. "But I think it's an opportunity to have a lot of fun. It can get really wild, fun, crazy and sexy."



G'HEAD...C'MON... New creators, new artists dare you to give the Man of Steel a second look in '99.

D.B. Nicholls and Jennifer Moore both wanna party like it's 1999.

CREATE-AN-EVENT

So, how hard is it to put together a major, earth-shattering comic book event? Apparently, not too hard at all. Heck, we can even teach you how to do it in four, yes four, easy steps. First, just take one event device at random from the first category (orange) and link it to an event device from the next category (blue), then to the next and so on. Got it? Good. Now start rockin' the comics world...

ATTENTION-GRABBING GIMMICK

Cancel the series (or an entire line if you have to) and relaunch it with an all-new #1 featuring...

The art on the inside might be drawn by monkeys, but toss in a smokin' Alex Ross cover and...

The giant, lenticular hologram on the cover may only work if you're full of Coors Light, but combine it with...

It might be a few months until you see a second issue, but count on the 15 variant covers and...

CONTRIVED PLOT DEVICE

...the hero's all-new costume (which couldn't possibly last for more than a few months, since his original likeness is so heavily licensed), plus...

...the dramatic "can't find the body except for this part of his head" death of the main character, and...

...the hero retiring and leaving his legacy to another, who's so doomed he might as well wear a red shirt and hang around Captain Kirk, plus...

...the fate of the world hanging in the balance, so if the hero fails, all the other licensed characters from that universe will also die, as well as...

ISSUE-FATTENING FILLER

...just in case you missed it the first 800 times it was retold in the comics or cartoon series, a retelling of the hero's origin, then you can...

...20 pages of pinups, at least two of which are drawn by guys you really wish had drawn the comic, then...

...behind-the-scenes sketches, all of which look like that old A-Ha "Take on Me" video, then you should...

...so many gratuitous splash pages, you'd think you had accidentally picked up a 1992 Image comic, then try to...

NON-PAYOFF CLIMAX!

...wrap it all up with the debut of the new creative team, who will completely ignore everything that's gone before!

...return everything to the normal status quo just as if nothing really happened, making you realize nothing really happened.

...cancel the book and relaunch it with an unnecessary #1 issue (see top bracket, first box for where to go from here).

...admit you have no idea how to end the storyline and explain everything away in two forced panels but fit in an homage to some lame '60s comic.

THE WIZARD Q&A

BY SCOTT BRICK • PHOTOS BY CRAIG MOLENHOUSE

HART FISHER stares death in the face and doesn't blink. Actually, he's strangely drawn to it. "Wow, that's some great sh--," Fisher says, staring at a decapitated body sitting on a toilet. It's a photograph from a coffee table book, where real corpses are manipulated into "artistic" poses. "Whoever did this is f---ed up, but these are some great shots."

Fisher's signing autographs at Dark Delicacies, a horror-themed bookstore in Burbank, Calif. Even surrounded by coffins, bats, a life-sized Frankenstein statue and legendary frightmeister artist Bernie Wrightson, Fisher's the scariest thing in the room. Maybe it's the long hair. The tattoos. The dark gaze. Perhaps it's the spiked combat boots he wears, or more likely the T-shirt that reads, "Smoke crack and worship Satan." Or maybe it's just the total package.

Fisher began his controversial comic career with his own *Dark Angel* and *Bill the Bull* comics before stepping into the limelight with a bio-comic based on Milwaukee's notorious serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer. He scared the pulp out of comicdom's heaviest hitters with *Kill Image* and *Kill Marvel*, teamed up with rock-thrasher Glen Danzig to run the highly graphic Verotik Comics line and even faked his own death just to see how many people would cheer at the news. His own company, Boneyard Press, publishes sexually explicit, ultra-violent work, so nasty that he's been banned in Canada, the United Kingdom, Japan and even Oklahoma! In short, he's had a...well, colorful career in comics.

Never shy to voice an opinion or defend a position, Fisher fought back and won when the families of Dahmer's victims sued him. When Marvel pissed him off, he printed a T-shirt announcing that the publisher could...uh, perform a sexual function on Fisher's family jewels. "I don't pick fights, though," Fisher maintains. "I'm not out to hurt nobody. But if you f--k with me, I'll fight back."

The book signing is fairly low-key and ends with a disappointing turnout. It looks like it's time to relax at a few of Fisher's favorite haunts, starting with Jumbo's Clown Room, the most-pathetic strip club in all of Los Angeles. Located in a dingy Hollywood mall, the club's sign is missing the "U" in Jumbo. It looks like the kind of place where bodies wind up in dumpsters. "Okay, what kind of goofy, I-don't-have-a-life questions you got there?" Fisher asks with a good-natured grin on his way to the front door. "C'mon, you can ask me inside."

HART FISH

He's profited from a serial killer, been banned in 4 countries and gave Marvel a nasty ultimatum. Meet comics' most **DANGEROUS MAN.**

ER

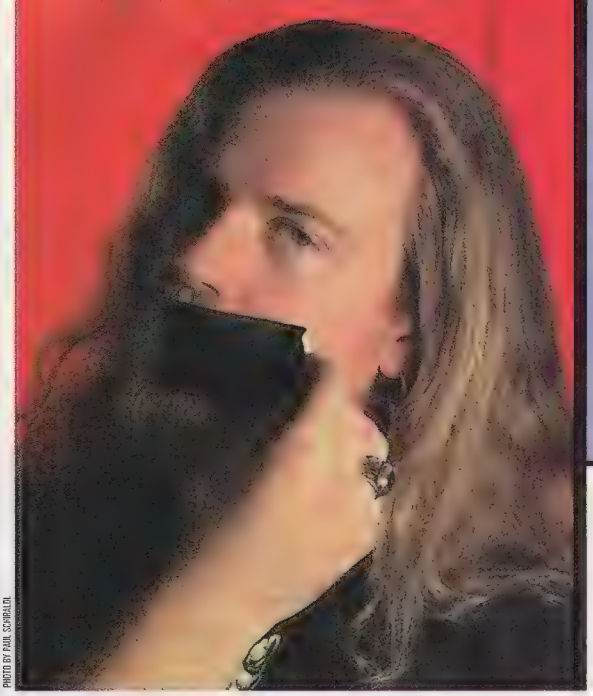


PHOTO BY PAUL SCHRALLER

VITAL STATS

NAME: Hart D. Fisher. "I'm not telling you what the 'D' stands for."
OCCUPATION: Comic book author
BORN: May 27, 1969 in Pittsburgh, PA
BASE OF OPERATIONS: L.A., Calif.
CAREER HIGHLIGHTS: Launched Boneyard Press in 1991 with *Dark Angel*. In '92 he offended most of the English-speaking world with a Jeffrey Dahmer comic book. Since then, he's published such in-your-face work as *Rush Limbaugh Must Die* and *Kill Image*. He's also printed up some infamous T-shirts proclaiming "Marvel Can Suck My C--k."
FAVORITE SERIAL KILLER: "They're all scum."

WIZARD: Is this your favorite hangout?

FISHER: This is where I come when I want to feel good about myself, because everyone here's so f---ing pathetic. Just total nastiness. I mean, c'mon, a strip club called a Clown Room? Gotta love that.

Okay, let's start with the "Marvel Can Suck My C--k" T-shirt.

[*Laughs*] What about it?

Well, why exactly can Marvel...uh, suck your c--k?

Marvel used specific tactics to drive independent publishers out of business by sheer force of volume. The idea was, "We'll publish so many books there won't be rack space for anybody else." Marvel had a definite agenda to drive out the independent publisher, which is me. My attitude was, you ain't getting rid of me. Suck my c--k, okay?

When did you print the T-shirts?

I debuted them at the San Diego Comicon [in 1995] and I sold 100 shirts in less than 24 hours. I couldn't believe it. I sold one off my back twice. I had Marvel guys come over and buy this stuff. [Former Marvel Editor-In-Chief] Tom DeFalco bought one. And some Dark Horse guys bought some for everyone at Dark Horse, gave them to guys like Frank Miller.

Did everyone at Marvel think they were funny?

John Romita Jr. [*Peter Parker, Thor* artist] threatened to kick one guy's ass if he didn't get out of their booth with that shirt.

Were you worried they'd sue?

No, they know I love that stuff. What've I got? What're they going to take? They're going to take my '83 Chevy Impala? I got a big mouth and I know everybody in the press.

Why did you do the Jeffrey Dahmer comic in the first place?

The idea came from Dan Madsen, the original publisher of [the ranchy, ultra-violent comic] *Faust*. We went to school together, and he thought I should do a personality comic with my own twist on it. I started doing research, and everybody glossed over the fact this guy [Dahmer] is just absolute scum. I mean, *People Magazine* put him in their Top 25 Most Intriguing People of the Year list! I wanted to portray him as the monster he was, handling a distasteful subject matter as tastefully as possible.

So you're not pro- serial killers?

I'm not a fan of serial killers at all. They're monsters, they're scum. I sent Dahmer a copy of the book signed, "I hope you rot in Hell." Dahmer was just human excrement.

What did you think when he died?

"Woo-hoo! Hope it hurt!"

You got sued by the families of Dahmer's victims, didn't you?

Yeah, they sued my ass off, it took me years to get out of that one. The judge ruled in my favor, but in a way that I couldn't get my legal fees back.

Any regrets?

None at all. I didn't do anything wrong. And look at the victims' families, these are the people

"I wasn't molested as a child or anything. I just hate lies. I DON'T THINK VIOLENCE IS FUN, I think it's a truly horrific act and I show it that way."

that sold the cookware Dahmer used to kill their kids. They sold the acid vat that boiled down their kids and they're telling me I'm bad?!? I couldn't believe these people. I wound up going on "A Current Affair," "Sally Jesse Raphael," "Jerry Springer," I was on "Entertainment Tonight" three times, and they were all trying to get me for exploiting the victims, for making them cry. I told Sally, "You're the one exploiting the victims, you're causing them very real pain *right now*." I didn't want to make anybody cry. Not until after they'd pissed me off. Then I wanted to.

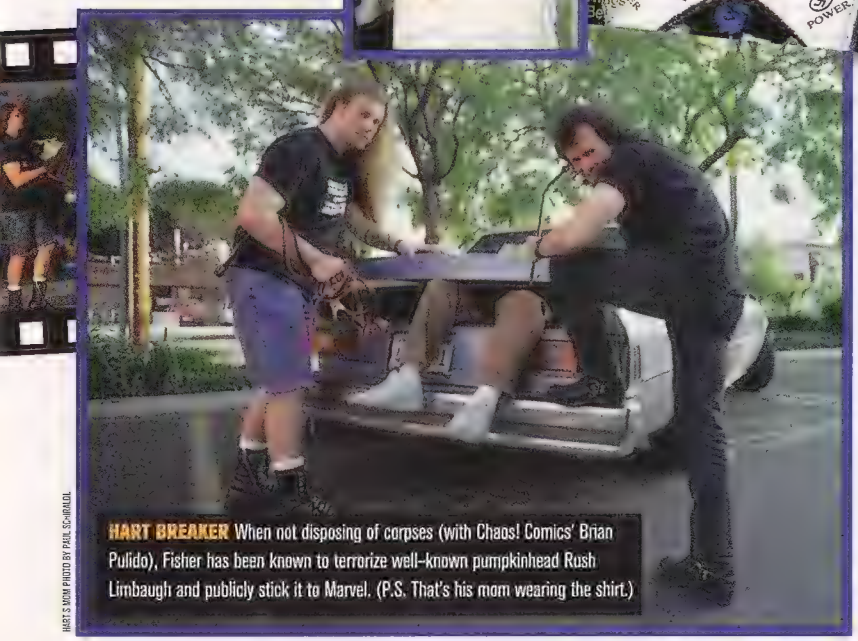
The strippers at Jumbo's begin to rapidly lose their appeal, so it's off to Sin-A-Matic in West Hollywood. "Normally it's a gay club, but on Saturday nights it's a bondage club," Fisher says, pointing to a doorway. "In the back room they have spankings and stuff. Spankings, beatings, candle-wax drippings. Fun, happy stuff."

Weaving his way through a crowd of leather and black latex, Fisher takes a seat in the corner. In a place like this, it wouldn't pay to let anyone sneak up on you....

Do you go to places like this a lot?
I do, I like to go out and dance and watch people get whipped. I've got that masochistic and sadistic side of me, I like that stuff. I like the whole dominatrix look.

Why did you print the *Rush Limbaugh Versus Howard Stern* comic? Do you hate those guys?
At the time, I liked Howard, but after I did the book I didn't because...[*ultra serious*] he had a problem with the book. Rush Limbaugh thought it was funny, but Howard had a problem with it. I offended Howard Stern!

Did he call you from his show to complain?
No, but Rush Limbaugh gave me a thumbs-up on his show. He said another book I did, *Rush Limbaugh Must Die*, was very funny.



HART BREAKER When not disposing of corpses (with Chaos! Comics' Brian Pulido), Fisher has been known to terrorize well-known pumpkinhead Rush Limbaugh and publicly stick it to Marvel. (P.S. That's his mom wearing the shirt.)

HART & MOM PHOTO BY PAUL SCHRADLL

So why did you fake your own death?
I've always played April Fools' jokes since I was a kid. So last year my managing editor, Joe Janovsky, dummied up a fake obituary from the *LA Times*, claiming I'd committed suicide, then leaked it over the Internet. Then he went to comic sites online and asked people, "Hey, did you see this?" My friends who were in on it went on the Internet, saying things like, "I'm glad he's dead and hope he rots in Hell!" just to provoke a reaction. No one came out! I couldn't believe it! All the people who've ever given me a hard time, and no one came out to piss on my grave. One friend posted that I'd killed myself because of my homosexual tendencies! [*Laughs*] That c--ksucker! I said, "You son of a bitch! I'll come back from the dead, but I'm gonna be stuck with that gay thing!"

So what're you doing for April Fools' Day this year?
Leaving town! There's going to be some serious payback this year, so I'm gettin' outta Dodge!

Where did your dark writing style come from?
I wasn't molested as a child or anything. I just hate lies. I don't think violence is fun, I think it's a truly horrific act and I show it that way. I think so many comics like *Cable* or *Punisher*, there's no emotional content to the violence.

Does your company, Boneyard Press, have a mission statement? Something like "Too dangerous for comics?"
Early on, the mission statement was to be the scariest, baddest, most nightmarish publisher out there. When you think fear, that's us. I was so good at it, I scared stores so bad they won't carry the books. I obviously did the job too well [*Laughs*].

What's Boneyard doing next?
We're doing a *Dark Angel* book for our eighth anniversary, coming out in May. It's going to be half Dark Angel, half Bill The Bull, which are the characters I started the company with. We're also publishing books now. I did two books of poetry, some of the most successful things I've ever done. Then we published Steve Elliott's novel *Jones Inn*, and it's getting rave reviews everywhere.

Are you phasing out comics?
No, I'm never going to phase out comics, I love 'em, been a fan all my life.

The night's not getting any younger, so it's time to move on. Last stop on Fisher's Scariest Places in Los Angeles tour is the Hollywood A Go-Go. Inside, women in bikinis and high heels dance on the bars and two beaten-down pool tables. "A place like this is almost sexier than a strip club," Fisher says with a grin, "because the women don't get naked, so they have to work it harder."

So how many tattoos you got?
My entire back is tattooed, from my

HART ATTACK

Think you know Hart Fisher? You'd be surprised. The most dangerous man in comics has certainly done more than his fair share of shocking things, but are you man enough to separate fact from fantasy? Take the following True or False quiz to determine just how wise you are in the Ways of the Hart.

1. Published a Jeffrey Dahmer bio-comic, went on dozens of talk shows, got sued by the victims' families and had to cough up $1300 plus legal fees.
2. Published *Kill Marvel* and managed to get Stan Lee to autograph it.
3. Hit a woman at a comic book convention when she started violently tearing down his booth in protest.
4. Published *Rush Limbaugh Must Die* and sent copies to Limbaugh's studio, only to get an on-air "thumbs up!" by the guy.
5. Faked his own death as an April Fools' Day prank just to see how people'd react.
6. Abuses drugs with rock star proportions.
7. Printed and sold a T-shirt that proclaimed, "Marvel Can Suck My C--k"!
8. Scared Todd McFarlane's wife by publishing *Kill Image*; got thrown out of Rob Liefeld's autograph line by security people.
9. Parades around in women's underwear, showing off his tattoos and piercings to just about any pretty face that comes along. ■ SB

ANSWERS: Believe it or not, they're all true except for #3, #6 and #9.

shoulders down to my ass. I've got a tattoo on each inner forearm. One's a dragon, the other's my company logo. You don't see anybody at DC with the Bat-signal tattooed on 'em, do you? You know what I'm saying? Do or die, baby!

Ever wake up to find a new tattoo?

No, no. I've put a lot of thought into all my tattoos. Each one means a lot to me. The company logo is an expression of our philosophy, it's about pain and desperation and frustration, and that primal need for life. [*Kabuki* and *Daredevil* writer] David Mack put the other one together for me, it means "Paingrin."

How about piercings?

I've got my d--k pierced.

Yikes! Don't they call that a Prince Albert?

Yeah. How come you know that?

Uh, no reason. Didn't that hurt?

Not that bad. I've been beaten up worse. For my black belt test in Tae Kwon Do I had to fight two black belts at once, the head instructor and the second head instructor. They beat the sh-- out of me so bad they apologized to my mom afterward.

Ever been arrested? Done time?

I've never been arrested, I don't have a police record. I've been in several lineups, though [*Laughs*]. I did what they were looking for, but they couldn't prove it. I can't say what it was for, because the statute of limitations isn't up. I can say it was for an assault beef, though. Assault and battery.

What's the weirdest thing one of your fans has ever done for you?

A fan bought my underwear once. I signed them right on the crotch. "The sweet spot. For George. Hart Fisher." He was a big biker dude, and his daughter was so embarrassed.

Is it true you donate your comics to charities?

I donate books to prison literacy programs and children's literacy programs. I've given books to shelters for abused women. For Halloween, I give away comics to kids. I don't give them adult stuff, of course, I give them our kids' books, or *Soldier of God*.

Isn't *Soldier of God* a Christian book?

Yeah, it's about this superhero who gets powers from quoting scripture [*Laughs*]. When Peter King, the guy who wrote it up, sent it to me, I kept wondering if it was a joke. I kept thinking, "Don't you know who I am?" Well, he found out. But yeah, why not? Not everything I put out is demented. But [King's] a wacko. When I faked my death, he was telling everybody I was a good Christian and spreading the word of the Lord, he was sorry to see me go. And I'm an atheist! [*Laughs*] This was a guy who couldn't keep anybody on his book for longer than one issue because they weren't Christian enough for him, and he thinks I'm a good little boy! What a nutbag.

What do you think is the biggest misconception about you?

I'm deeply in love with my girlfriend, which people probably don't expect. She's a crazy, whacked-out pistol of a woman, a really wild British chick, somebody I respect, somebody I learn from, who's also very beautiful. So you see, really, I'm a fairly normal guy.

If you weren't doing comics, what would you be doing?

I write books. I've got a career as a graphic designer, designing packaging for a porn distributor, Vivid Video. I write poetry. I'm always going to be writing and creating in some way, working with creative people. I get a lot of juice out of that. I enjoy pushing them to do their best work.

Ever thought of doing more mainstream work? What if Marvel revived *Son of Satan* and wanted you to write it?

That's a good question. I was a huge Marvel fan when I was a kid, so I might, but only on two conditions. Number one, they'd have to pay me up front in cash. Number two, I wouldn't stop publishing my work, I wouldn't change any of my views, I wouldn't stop wearing my shirts. It'd have to be one hell of a sweet deal, but I'd probably do it, if it was cash. Someone wants to pay me to do the work, I'll do the work. I'm a mercenary, I go where the war is. (W)

During this interview, L.A.-based freelancer Scott Brick found himself forced into the trunk of Hart Fisher's car. Good thing Hart actually likes Scott....

TONGUE BATH What's longer–Brian Pulido's tongue or Hart's rap sheet?

Don't let the pleated skirt fool you!

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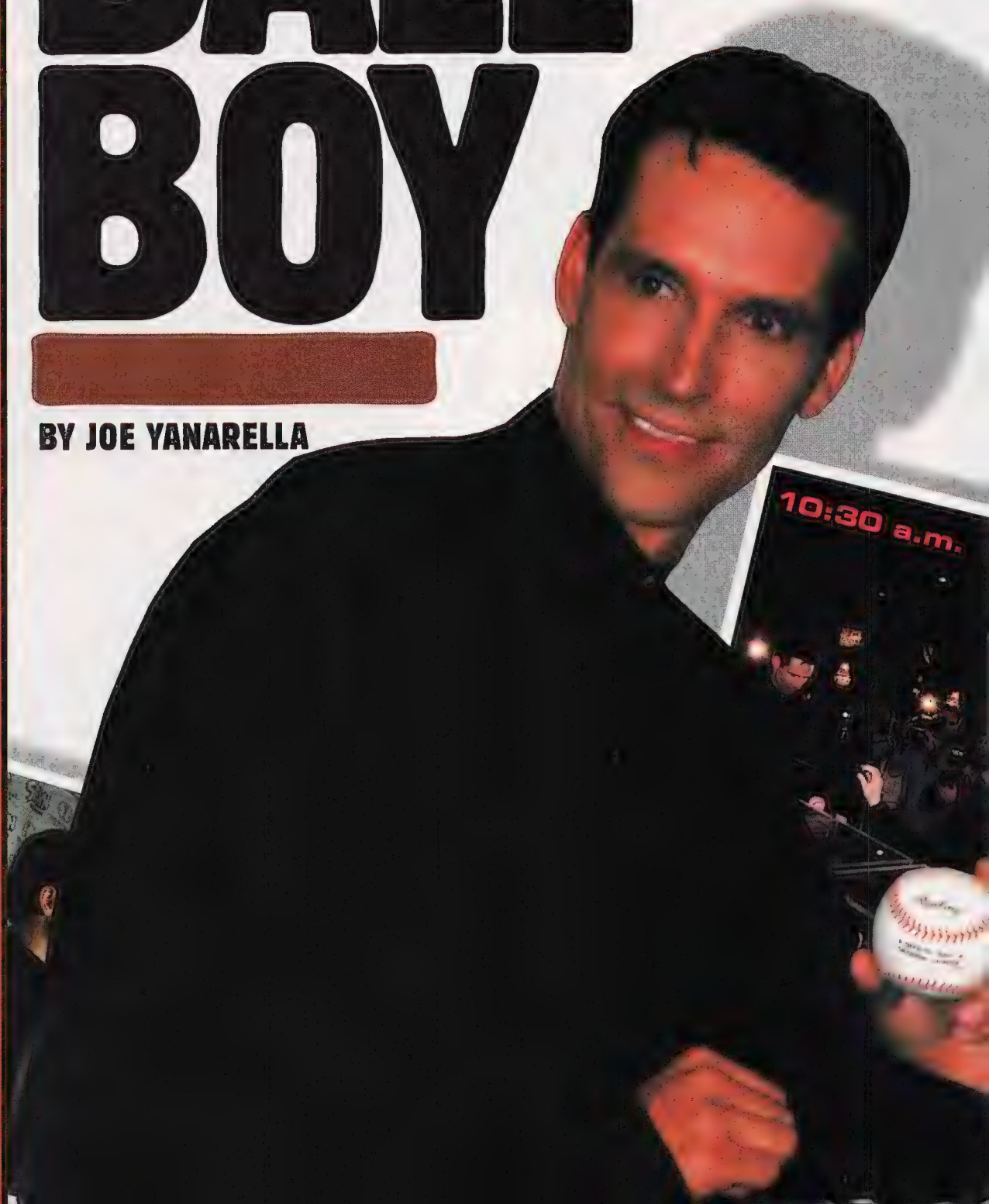
BALL BOY

TODD McFARLANE'S 3 MILLION DOLLAR PURCHASE OF MARK McGWIRE'S 70TH HOME RUN BALL TRIGGERS THE MOST EXCITING 24 HOURS OF HIS LIFE

BY JOE YANARELLA



PHOTOS BY PAUL SCHIRALDI & CRAIG BLANKENHORN

"I'm just the kid next door," Todd McFarlane explains, his face illuminated by the intense glare of a swarm of TV cameras. Photographers furiously snap pictures of McFarlane, sharply dressed in a black, button-down, collarless shirt and matching black jeans, as a throng of 100 reporters hangs on his every word during a press conference at the New York Plaza Hotel. "This is as good as my wardrobe gets. I own one suit, which my wife bought for me. I drive a '92 Acura Legend with 70 dings in the side."

But there's one big difference about this "kid next door." Next to McFarlane sit nine baseballs enclosed in glass cases—baseballs that McFarlane paid over $3.3 million for. Included in that bunch is Mark McGwire's 70th home run ball that set the major league, single-season homer mark, breaking Roger Maris' 1961 tally. For the "Big Boy," as Todd calls it, he paid $3 million, the largest amount of money ever paid for a piece of sports memorabilia.

McFarlane shelled out the big bucks at an auction in New York City in mid-January, and here he is in New York—on the first day of the American International Toy Fair, where he is showing off his new Spawn toys—to explain to the world why he did it. Why he's not a nut. Or maybe why he is.

In the next 24 hours, McFarlane will rub elbows with rock legend Ozzy Osbourne, schmooze with Matt Lauer on the "Today" show and trade barbs with radio shock jock Howard Stern.

***Wizard* decided to tag along. Won't you?**

MONDAY

10:30 a.m. Introduced as the creative force behind Spawn, an Emmy winner and a Grammy-award nominee, Todd enters the Plaza Hotel conference room, accompanied by a security guard carrying the record-setting McGwire home run ball.

"The reason I bought the ball was I got caught up in baseball this year," Todd says. "I wanted to attach myself to something I love, my first love, baseball. I'll probably call this the 'McFarlane Collection,' instead of the 'Guy Who Has More Money Than Brains Collection.' This is the crown jewel of sports memorabilia."

10:40 a.m. Todd walks the press through the home run balls hit by McGwire and Sammy Sosa one by one, explaining the value of each and how it was acquired. "The entire purchase was $3.3 million," Todd says. "Sammy Sosa's 61 was $15,000. After spending $2.7 [for McGwire's 70th home run ball plus $300,000 to the auction house], $15,000 was like chump change."

10:45 a.m. Todd explains how he wasn't even at the auction, which took place in New York, but placed his bids via conference call as good friend and Spawn namesake Al Simmons videotaped. McFarlane, who was going head-to-head with an unnamed bidder, felt the price would top out under $2 million. It didn't. "We were both sweating," Todd admits. "My comfort zone was $2 million. I blew my wad. I have nothing left in the bag."

10:50 a.m. The question of protecting his investment comes up, and Todd shrugs. "Everybody else is more concerned about insurance than I am," he says. "There's mud on [the baseballs]. They've been hit. One day, when nobody's looking, I might even play catch with them in the backyard."

11 a.m. A reporter inquires about what happens if another player tops McGwire's mark. "If the record falls," Todd chuckles, "I go from the idiot who spent $3 million on the crown jewel of memorabilia to the idiot who spent $3 million on a $5 ball."

11:28 a.m. Todd holds the Mark McGwire #70 ball for the first time as photographers scramble for tight shots of Todd and the baseball.

11:45 a.m. The case containing McGwire #69 topples to the ground with a huge crash. "Don't worry, it's insured," McFarlane yells out good-naturedly.

10:30, 11:28, PHOTOS © 1999 CRAIG BLANKENHORN

12:15 p.m. Back at 1515 Broadway, McFarlane tours the finished McFarlane Toys showroom at the International Toy Fair for the first time. He observes the Metal Gear Solid display and asks, "Does this turn?" as he grabs and fiddles with the top of the display that should be rotating. A personal security guard escorts him and his wife, Wanda, through the showroom.

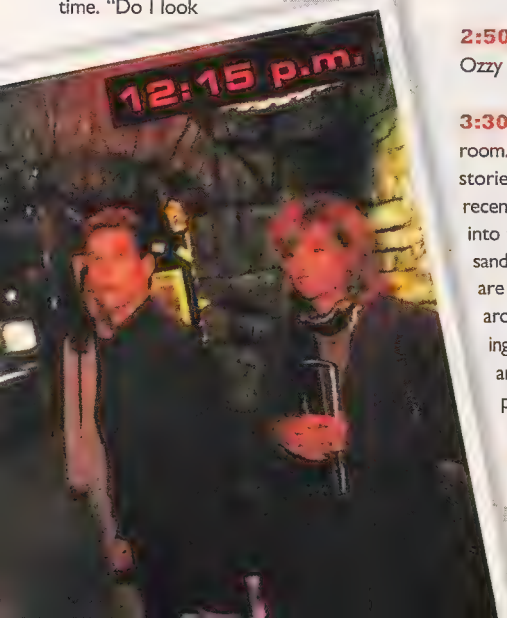
1:30 p.m. A huge press contingent waits impatiently for rock star Ozzy Osbourne to arrive and plug his new action figure that Todd has produced. A CNN news crew follows Todd around. "What's the appeal of Spawn?" asks the CNN reporter.

"He's unpolished," responds Todd. "We adults buy toys; they're called cars and VCRs. With Spawn, we don't have to stop collecting toys when we're 23, 33, even 43."

After the interview, Todd pops a Cinnamon Tic Tac, massages the CNN cameraman's bulky shoulders and asks, "Don't you ever get hot in there, big guy?" Ozzy and his entourage suddenly arrive and scurry into a private conference room.

1:35 p.m. The Ozzy press conference kicks off as a representative from Sony Licensing and Todd address the press. Microphones from MTV and ABC Radio jut in their faces. A reporter inquires about the Ozzy figure. "He's looking pretty good, isn't he?" Todd says. "Most guys don't say, 'Give me the version where I have 42 percent body fat.' Is Ozzy the guy who's a fit for my company? Yeah. He's a rebel. The same thing that attracts people to Ozzy is what attracts people to our company." Todd goes on to say he'd like to shoot live-action music videos and confesses this is the first time he will be meeting Ozzy.

2 p.m. Ozzy enters the press conference and spots his action figure for the first time. "Do I look like this?" yelps Ozzy. "I look like Conan the Barbarian on LSD. It's flattering. I'm 50 and I don't think I look 50."



"Is it anatomically correct?" someone shouts out.

"I don't know, you'll have to look down the trousers," laughs Ozzy.

"He's anatomically correct," Todd chimes in. "We gave him a big package."

Ozzy wears a long black suit with circular, wire-rimmed sunglasses. The fingers of his left hand are individually tattooed with the letters O-Z-Z-Y, and his right hand is adorned with various rings. A powerful smell of cologne surrounds him. "Give us a one-word description of the doll," a reporter says.

"Crazy," Ozzy responds. Todd beams from ear to ear.

2:25 p.m. Wanda assists with the switching of the cases for McGwire home run balls #1 and #70. "Todd was afraid it would get knocked over," explains Wanda as she has the record-breaking homer #70 moved away from the showroom aisle.

2:50 p.m. Todd pops another Tic Tac. Ozzy departs and autographs are exchanged.

3:30 p.m. The first real lull in the showroom. Todd entertains a group of people with stories about the fantasy baseball camp he recently attended in Florida as he sneaks back into the kitchen area where some leftover sandwiches and half-eaten salads sit. "Where are the pickles?" Todd asks as he forages around for his first meal since the morning. Somebody offers to get him a sandwich, and he says, "Don't worry, I'll look for a piece of fruit."

3:40 p.m. Someone interrupts Todd and asks about the possibility of a phone interview with *The New York Times*.

He hustles back to a quiet back room and picks up the phone. A reporter puts him on hold, and he flips through a copy of *The Crow* #1 as he waits, critiquing the book with Todd McFarlane Productions Art Director Brent Ashe.

5 p.m. TMP President of Entertainment Terry Fitzgerald looks on as Todd is interviewed by NTV from Japan. Fitzgerald shows a Polaroid photo of himself kissing the butt on one of the Mark McGwire posters in the showroom. "This is me saying good-bye to my next 10 raises," laughs Fitzgerald.

5:30 p.m. Todd sneaks off into the privacy of a locked room and wolfs down a piece of pepperoni pizza with PR person Carmen Bryant and reviews his itinerary with his personal security guard. For one of the few times all day, Todd is off-limits to the public, and declines a reporter's request to join him. But the respite is brief.

5:40 p.m. Detective Kevin Cockerham of the New York City Police Department also takes a quick break in the back room to grab a ginger ale. He is one of a team of rotating security guards—two at a time—that will monitor the nine baseballs in the McFarlane showroom 24 hours a day. A long-time Mets fan whose sister once dated former Met great Tommy Agee, Cockerham sums up his simple objective this week: "To make sure nothing happens to those balls." When asked if there is anything else, he repeats: "To make sure nothing happens to those balls."

12.16.5.15 PHOTOS © 1999 CRAIG BLANKENHORN

5:45 p.m. Todd's back on the phone doing a pre-interview for his appearance on the Howard Stern radio program the next day. It is revealed during this pre-interview that McFarlane once worked at a diaper factory; Howard should have a field day with that. The pre-interview with the Stern show is quickly followed by a phone interview with *The Calgary Sun*.

6:15 p.m. McFarlane walks out the door of the McFarlane showroom with a piece of pepperoni pizza in one hand and a bottle of iced tea in the other and heads off to do "Moneyline" on CNN with Lou Dobbs.

6:45 p.m. Fitzgerald learns from lawyers that the final contracts have been signed for the Spawn 2 movie, the sequel to the live-action New Line film that grossed $68 million worldwide. Fitzgerald informs Todd. Everyone is overjoyed.

7:10 p.m. Todd's scheduled 6:30 p.m. appointment with "Moneyline" has been bumped back to 7:20, forcing him to withdraw from a scheduled media event with the press back at the McFarlane showroom at 7:30 p.m. With several more interviews scheduled, McFarlane can't afford to slow down. The night won't end for McFarlane until he returns to his hotel late that evening.

TUESDAY

6:30 a.m. Fitzgerald discusses details of the Spawn sequel with a reporter and also reveals that he and Todd will be involved in a Doom movie based on the popular video game. They will be creatively producing and working on script and character designs.

6:45 a.m. Todd swoops through the lobby of the Kimberly Suites in Manhattan and jumps in a black limousine to take him to his "Today" show appearance.

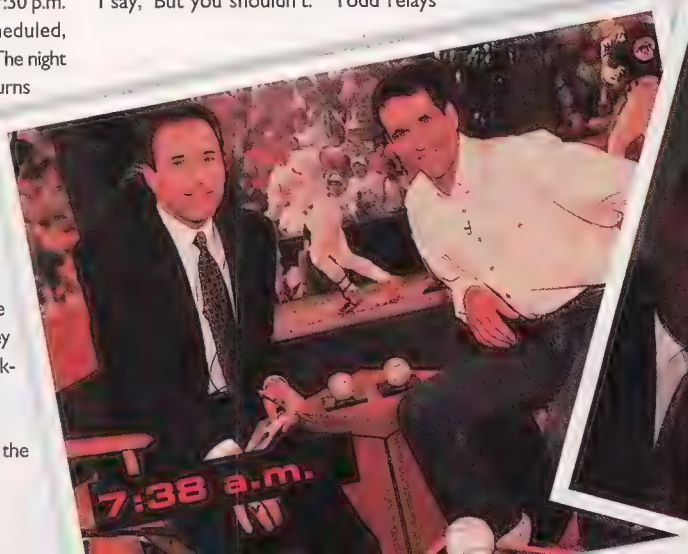
7:07 a.m. Todd jabs at a tomato with his fork as he sits on the couch in the "Today" show green room. He's flanked by Fitzgerald and Bryant as his personal security guard munches on a pastry. Todd—dressed casually in a white, button-down shirt and blue jeans—scans the *USA Today* sports section, and reads the story about his $3 million baseball purchase. The green room—where guests await their turn to be interviewed—has one long, black couch and huge posters on the wall of "Today" show talent, including Gene Shalit, Willard Scott, Katie Couric, Matt Lauer, Al Roker and others. *The Daily News* lies open on the couch to a page with a blaring headline "Meet the 'Pyscho Fan' who bought $3M ball," accompanied by a huge photo of Todd.

7:09 a.m. Al Roker pops his head into the green room. Bryant has her photo taken with Roker. Roker turns to Todd and says, "My daughter says she watches Spawn, and I say, 'But you shouldn't.'" Todd relays an anecdote about a woman who told Todd that her 10-year-old watches Spawn, and Todd says, "I wouldn't let anyone under 15 watch it."

7:11 a.m. Todd is whisked off to hair and makeup by an NBC employee. The whole process of applying makeup takes all of two minutes. "Wow, you're a miracle worker," Todd says good-naturedly. "It's amazing," chimes in Roker, sitting in the next chair.

7:14 a.m. Roker returns to the green room, this time with a personal camera in tow. He hands the camera to an NBC page and has his picture taken with Todd.

7:19 a.m. Todd is asked to sign the "Today" show autograph book. When he sees all the signatures in the book, he says,

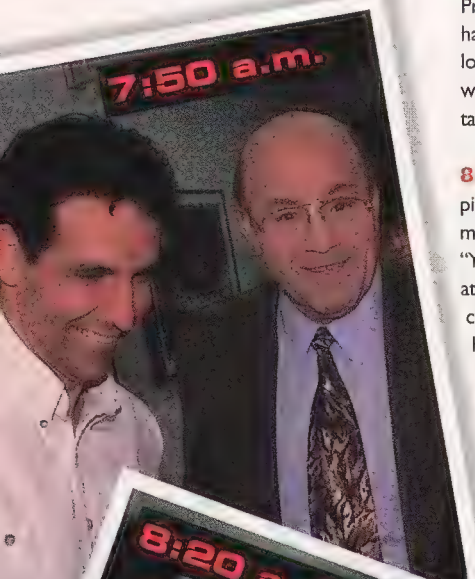


"Oooh, auction." Todd signs "Having a ball, hugs 'n' kisses" and draws a baseball with the number 70 on it.

7:28 a.m. Todd heads to the studio, accompanied by his security guard, personal assistant Sheila Egger, Bryant and an NBC staffer. Fitzgerald waits behind in the green room. Former NBC "Today" employee and major league baseball player Joe Garagiola pops his head in the green room and says hello.

7:36 a.m. Katie Couric strolls into the green room, smartly dressed in a gray jacket and skirt. She good-naturedly smiles and says hello to everyone and sits down. Meanwhile, Roker is interviewing people congregating outside the "Today" show window.

7:38 a.m. Todd shakes hands with Matt Lauer. The record-breaking 70th home run ball is on display in the studio. Katie flips through the Life section of *USA Today* in the green room as Todd is interviewed. Matt asks Todd if he experienced buyer's remorse after purchasing the ball. Todd counters that he experienced "buyer's manic-depressive coma. For 10 days, I felt that."



7:50 a.m. The interview ends and Todd supervises the repackaging of the balls. He and Garagiola are introduced and Garagiola jokes that "Todd just bought my eighth home run ball for $27.50." Garagiola adds that he makes speeches for children in schools and on Indian reservations and gives them toys and gifts. He discusses the possibility of Spawn toys being donated.

8:05 a.m. Todd hops into his limo to head to West 57th Street and "The Howard Stern Show."

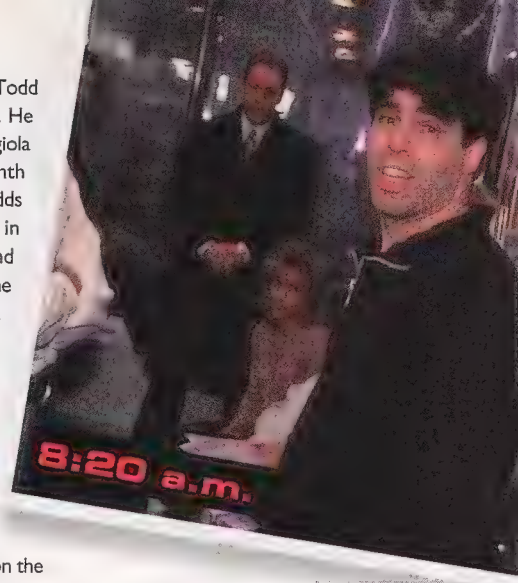
8:20 a.m. Stern show producer Gary Dell'Abate unlocks the door to the K-ROCK Studio and introduces himself as two cameramen film for use on the E! television show. Gary leads the group to the tiny Stern show waiting room. Todd reaches into a mysterious Tupperware container and pulls out a Howard Stern figure, roughly 12 inches in size. "It took four days to make," Todd explains to Gary. "We started to do Fartman, but we knew [Howard's] trying to distance himself from that event. We're going to try and get [Howard] to sign the deal right on the air."

8:30 a.m. Former "Little House on the Prairie" star Melissa Gilbert strolls by in the hallway, sporting tinted, red sunglasses and looking trim. McFarlane presses against the wall to let her pass as the E! cameras roll on, taping Gilbert's departure.

8:35 a.m. Todd asks if anyone has a blank piece of paper. He pulls out a Red Sharpie marker, writes on the paper in large letters "YES I WILL" and puts the name Howard Stern at the bottom with a line under it. "This is my contract," Todd laughs, hoping to snag a Howard Stern figure licensing deal.

8:45 a.m. Todd pulls out an infrared device and checks the #70 ball for a special infrared dot, applied by Major League Baseball, authenticating it. "If [Howard] wants to fondle your ball, he has to wear a glove," laughs Bryant.

Gary bounces back in the room and



instructs Todd to "keep your headphones on and stay close to the microphone." Todd pulls out the Howard figure again. "That's great," Gary says. "[Howard] loves that stuff."

Todd explains that he can make the doll with a voice chip so it can talk, similar to the Austin Powers figure he's working on. "We can have it burp," laughs Gary.

Counters Todd, "It can say, 'I want anal sex.'"

8:50 a.m. Todd is finally called in, and as Stern introduces him, he says to Todd, "Man, you're a weird guy. You're a weirdo." Stern immediately launches into the fact that Todd once worked at a diaper factory.

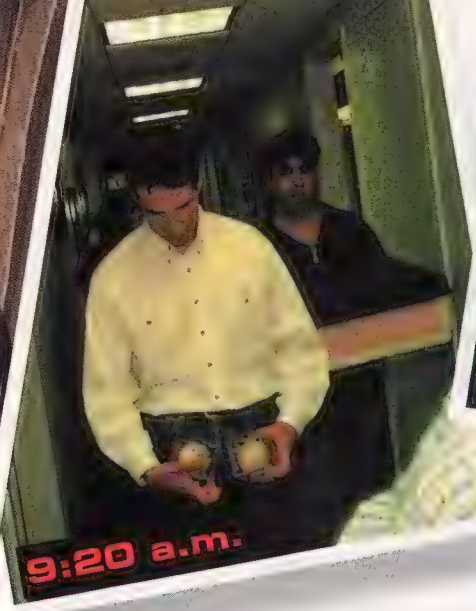
"I don't believe you put your hands on doody," says Howard.

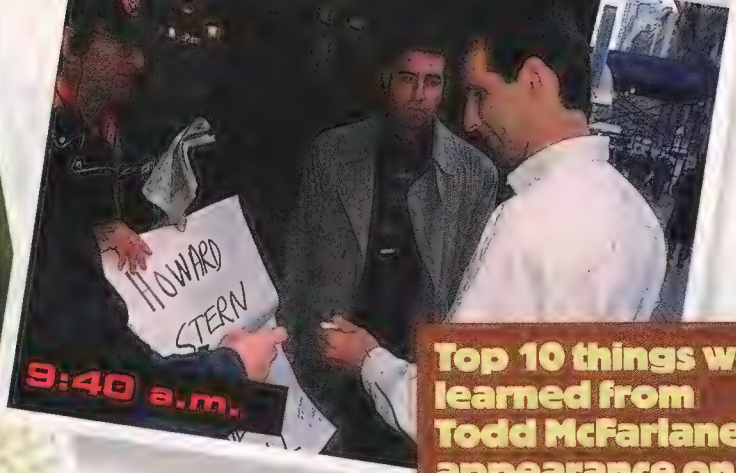
"I've seen every color," responds Todd.

"Did you wear gloves?" Howard quizzes. "No," laughs Todd. "After 16-hour days, you never could get it from underneath your fingernails."

8:52 a.m. Stern shifts focus to Todd's early comics career and his work on Spider-Man. "Why did [Marvel] used to give you crap?" Stern asks.

"When I came up on Spider-Man, silly me, I decided to take this 1965 look, given the fact it was 1988, 1989, and update him," Todd explains. "He was dating a beautiful model, Mary Jane Watson, but she dressed in





K-Mart clothes and didn't own a hair curler. My wife's not a supermodel, and she buys nice clothes and puts makeup on. I just messed around with the character, and they had a heart attack." Eventually, Todd adds, his editor-in-chief ordered him to "'Stop drawing that spaghetti webbing or I'm going to have you fired.' The next day I just made more spaghetti webbing and big eyes."

8:57 a.m. Stern steers the conversation to Spawn and gushes, "The HBO series is great. I'm a huge fan. I love Spawn. That is a great comic. But why a black man?"

"The simple answer is, 'Why not?'" Todd responds. "We have enough pure-white-boy superheroes: Clark Kent, Peter Parker and Bruce Wayne." [*EDITOR'S NOTE: For more on HBO's animated "Spawn," see page 62.*]

8:59 a.m. Stern begins to drill Todd about his wife, whom Todd began dating when Wanda was 13. "And you were 40, right?" jokes Howard. Todd was 17 at the time. "That's still a little weird," Howard says.

"Her old man didn't like me for the first five years," Todd admits. "I had to mow his lawn whenever I wanted to come over to the house and eat dinner." After Howard asks Todd more probing sexual questions, Todd confesses, "She didn't come today because she thought you were going to ask her to get naked."

"So what, what's the big deal?" laughs Howard.

9:03 a.m. After holding the $3 million baseball, Stern can't get over the fact that Todd paid so much money for it. "I got news for ya, I would sell you my real balls for 3 million dollars," Howard says. "I have Lou Gehrig's ears. I'll give them to you for free."

9:05 a.m. Todd whips out the Howard Stern action figure and shows it to Stern, who is amazed. "Look, there's a detailed action figure of myself," Stern gasps. "That is beautiful. Now *that's* worth $3 million." Stern takes the figure from Todd and examines it. "I gotta tell you something, this is very lifelike," Stern says.

9:09 a.m. Todd produces the makeshift contract he constructed and hands it to Howard. "I had my lawyers draw up this contract so we could get this figure done here," Todd says.

"We're going to have to hold off on that one," Stern says. "I wanna buy this."

"That complexion is a little pasty," Stern sidekick Robin Quivers points out.

"No wonder I couldn't get girls in high school," Howard counters.

9:20 a.m. The interview ends, and as Todd exits the studio, he inspects the #70 home run ball, lamenting that it got dropped during the interview. Next door in the control room where Stern regular Stuttering John mans the phone lines, a woman yells, "This girl wants to date Todd McFarlane," referring to a caller.

"He's off the air," someone informs her. "And he's married."

9:25 a.m. Todd and his entourage gather up their belongings from the waiting room as Quivers departs to grab a soft drink. Stern regular Fred Norris walks by during the commercial break. But Stern never leaves the sanctity of his studio. "Howard was scared to death of the paper," Todd says of the contract he presented to Stern on the air. "When he saw it, he moved back."

9:40 a.m. On his way to his limousine, Stern groupie Melrose Larry Green intercepts Todd. Wearing a Howard Stern jacket and listening to the show with headphones, Green wears a sign that says, "Howard Stern Is Tall." Todd autographs Green's sign for him and hops in his stretch limo as Green thanks him profusely. Todd drives off, and the most exciting 24 hours of his life comes to a close. Not bad for the "kid next door." Not bad at all.

Top 10 things we learned from Todd McFarlane's appearance on 'The Howard Stern Show'*:

1) Todd used to work in a diaper factory and had to rinse dirty diapers.

2) Todd met his wife Wanda when he was 17 and she was 13. Her father used to make Todd mow the lawn whenever he came over and ate dinner.

3) Marvel Editor-in-Chief Tom DeFalco would always yell at Todd to stop drawing spaghetti webbing and those big eyes on Spider-Man, and Todd would just go back and do it again the next day.

4) The sequel to the Spawn movie will be R-rated.

5) Todd has no intention of ever selling the Mark McGwire $3 million baseball.

6) Todd made a Howard Stern action figure which he would only show on the air and would not allow to be photographed. He tried to get Howard to sign a contract on air, but Howard refused. Howard offered to buy the figure.

7) Howard has tons of toys on display at his house, including Catwoman, Batman, Spawn, Clown and a Spider-Man wall mural which sits under his fish tank.

8) Howard's cousin painted covers for DC Comics, including Batman, Superman and Green Lantern.

9) Todd's Spawn soundtrack outsold Howard's Private Parts soundtrack.

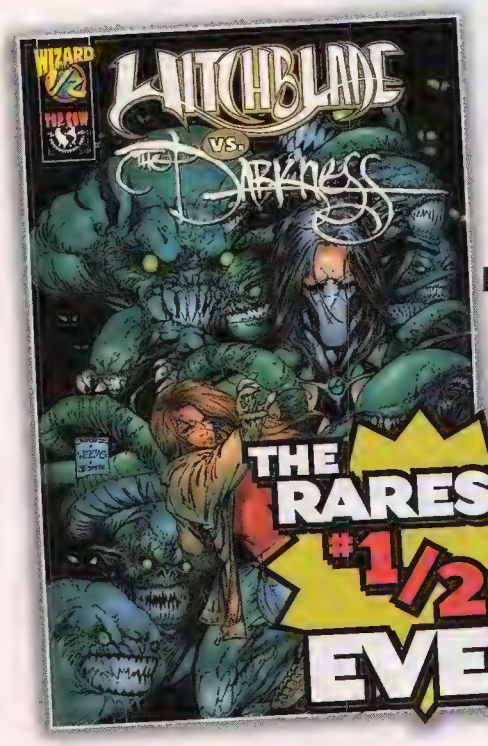
10) Quote from Todd: "I'm one of the few males in this country who can say, 'Howard Stern touched my balls.'" ■ JY

*An excerpt from "The Howard Stern Show"

Senior Managing Editor Joe Yanarella's most exciting 24 hours had three circus midgets, a bearded lady and a tub of Crisco. For a complete diary account, go to Wizardworld.com.

HOWARD STERN PHOTO COURTESY EVERETT COLLECTION

WITCHBLADE VS. DARKNESS #1/2



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† Annual Percentage Rate (APR)	18.4% for purchases, which may vary.
Variable-Rate Information	Your APR may vary. The rate is determined by adding 9.9 percentage points to the highest U.S. Prime Rate as published in *The Wall Street Journal* on the 15th of March, June, September, and December. On June 15, 1998, the U.S. Prime Rate was 8.5%.
Grace period for repayment of balance for purchases	At least 25 days, if each month, we receive payment in full of your New Balance Total by the Payment Due Date.
Method of computing the balance for purchases	Average Daily Balance (including new transactions).
Transaction fees for cash advances and fees for paying late or exceeding the credit limit	Transaction fee for Bank and ATM cash advances: 2% of each cash advance (minimum $2). Transaction fee for credit card cash advance checks: 1% of each cash advance (minimum $2, maximum $10). Late-payment fee: $25. Over-the-credit-limit fee: $25.
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CASTING call

WIZARD casts the CAPTAIN AMERICA MOVIE!

BY A BUNCH OF WIZARD STAFFERS

Tap Captain America's veins, and out will pour red, white and blue. Analyze his sweat, and you'll find he's oozing pure patriotism. From coast to coast and from pillar to post, he's America's number one hero.

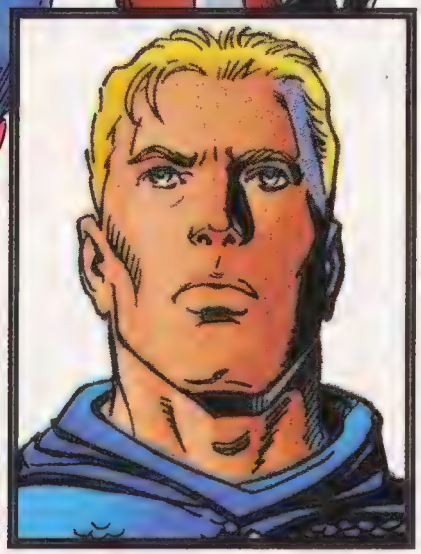
So what if Cap's first movie blew more chunks than a bulimic supermodel? We're here to set things right—to cast a *good* "Captain America" movie, one where the Red Skull isn't some wimpy-ass Italian geek and where the star of the film is chosen for his looks and acting ability, not because he's some reclusive novelist's son.

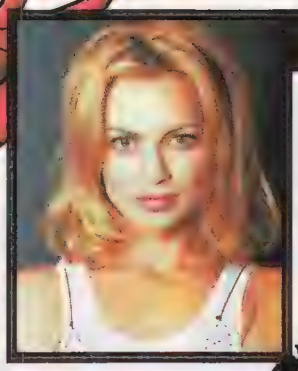
Our "Cap" film would follow the Star-Spangled Avenger through the last days of World War II, with our hero stomping ass on the most ruthless fascists around before being buried in tons of ice and subsequently revived in the present day. Awakening to find a world still very much in need of heroes, Cap would leap back into the fray, protecting democracy with a clenched fist and a bulletproof shield.

What true American could resist this film's lure? Its release date would become a national holiday...and they'd serve apple pie with every ticket sold. Wave those Stars and Stripes high, folks!

JIM DAVIDSON as CAPTAIN AMERICA

Jim Davidson (of TV's "Pacific Blue") is a walking ad for Gold's Gym anyway, so who better to play the war hero whose super-soldier serum boosts him to above Olympic-athlete levels? Plus he should have no problem portraying white bread Steve Rogers on screen.





KYLIE TRAVIS as SHARON CARTER

KA-BOOM! Blond bombshell Kylie Travis' ("Retroactive") eyes sparkle with the same elegant mischief that is spy Sharon Carter's stock-in-trade.

JONATHAN TAYLOR THOMAS as BUCKY

To be frank, the only reason we cast annoying punk Jonathan Taylor Thomas ("Home Improvement") as the doomed sidekick Bucky is because we desperately want to off the little bastard—and killing him in real life would land us in the slammer.

TOM BERENGER as NICK FURY

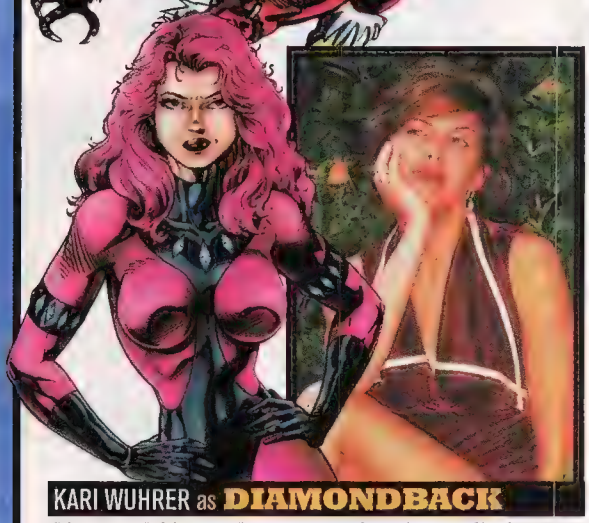
Hardened spymaster Nick Fury opened the secret file on grizzled actor Tom Berenger ("The Substitute.") Oddly enough, when he stared at the file's photo, it was as if his own face—sans eye patch—was staring back at him.

CHARLES SHEEN as NOMAD

Charles Sheen (not Charlie, as he called himself in "Hot Shots!") really has that dramatic posing thing down pat. With an icy stare and an intense on-screen persona, Sheen holds all the cards needed to portray Cap's sometime-sidekick, Nomad.

DENNIS HAYSBERT as THE FALCON

Grim-faced Dennis Haysbert ("Absolute Power") would frown to great heights as the haunted hero, Falcon. All he needs to pull off the role are some fake wings and a special-effects falcon partner.



KARI WUHRER as DIAMONDBACK

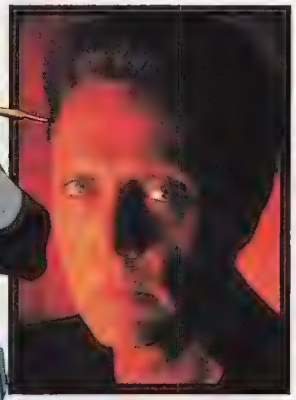
It's a good thing we have comprehensive medical insurance, because watching the pixie-ish Kari Wuhrer ("Sliders") slink across the screen in a skintight costume as the reformed villain Diamondback might give us heart palpitations. Medic!!!

DICK BUTKUS as DUM DUM DUGAN

Meaty ex-football star Dick Butkus ("Johnny Dangerously") tackles acting with the same manic glee he did NFL quarterbacks. Football's loss is our gain, because Butkus packs both the size and gruff nature of spy Dum Dum Dugan.

ROBERT DUVALL as JARVIS

As the haughty English butler Jarvis, Robert Duvall would serve up a goodly dose of dignity and dry wit, as he did in the smashing film "Deep Impact."



CHRISTOPHER WALKEN as THE RED SKULL

Words may fail us, but pictures—especially scary ones of Christopher Walken—never lie. Walken, evil's poster boy from "True Romance," has the twisted genius to play the sneering, no-good, Nazi Red Skull.

QUIET ON THE SET!

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF OUTLINE; CHRISTOPHER WALKEN/© BRIAN SMITH, KARI WUHRER/© NEIL PRESTON, ROBERT DUVALL/© JEFF SLOCUMB, JONATHAN TAYLOR THOMAS/© STEPHEN DWELLAN, KYLE TRAVIS/© ALBERT SANCHEZ, CHARLE SHEEN/© AARON RAPOPORT, TOM BERENGER/© LANCE STAEGLER; PHOTOS COURTESY OF FOTO FANTASES: JIM DAVIDSON; PHOTOS COURTESY OF EVERETT COLLECTION: DICK BUTKUS, DENNIS HAYSBERT

SHE'S GOT THE POWER!

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AWESOME

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WET DREAM

Top Cow's watery 'Fathom' gets animated for 2002 movie splash

When it debuted last summer, **Michael Turner**'s comic book series *Fathom* washed over the industry with copies disappearing faster than lifeboats on the *Titanic*. But there's a new wave on the horizon, and this one's coming up over the famed Hollywood sign: "Fathom" is in development to become a major animated movie by Fox Animation Studios, a division of 20th Century Fox—with Turner signed on as one of the producers.

"I'm completely thrilled," Turner said. "It happened really quick. I mean, the book is still very new. But some people in the movie industry saw it and came to us. Some wanted to make it into live-action television, and some wanted a live-action movie, but they didn't ring well. You would need a huge budget to do this as a television show and it would be very hard to not make it cheesy. If you did a live-action movie you would be talking $200 million. But with animation you can get away with a lot of stuff for smaller budgets. You can spend $35-$45 million in animation and you've got a $200-million-budget-looking movie. So that was very, very appealing."

Fathom, for those of you with your heads in the sand, tells the story of marine biologist Aspen Matthews and her strange connection to the water. Having no memories of her life before the age of 11, Aspen's earliest thoughts are of her aboard the cruise ship *Paradise*, which had been mysteriously missing for almost a decade. Now an adult, she's encountered a strange underwater races, a major military conspiracy and bizarre alien technology. Having some sort of water-based abilities (including turning her body into pure H_2O), Aspen naturally finds herself smack in the middle of all this chaos.

Currently, the film's budget remains undetermined, but estimates place it between $30- to $90 million dollars.

Top Cow President **Brad Foxhoven** is also thrilled about Fox's commitment.

WATERING HOLE Better towel off, boys–Fathom's wet and ready for her big screen debut.

FACTS & FACES

CLOSE UP MICHAEL TURNER

MICHAEL TURNER, 28, worked on such Top Cow comics as *Ballistic* and *Codename: Stryke Force* before exploding onto the scene with 1995's *Witchblade*. After roughly 25 issues of the fan-favorite title, the penciler moved on to his newest Top Cow creation *Fathom*. Currently, he's working on the comic series and will be heavily involved in the upcoming Fox animated movie as one of the producers.

MIKE TURNER. PHOTO BY PAUL SCIRABALDI.

"I think it's a phenomenal opportunity," he said. "Chris Meledandri [Fox Animation Studios President] has basically stated several times he does not want to do a Disney-style movie; he wants to do his own style. He wants to go at the demographic *Fathom* nails, which is kind of a teenage, more-adult style animated movie. Basically you're looking at a PG-13 movie. It's not going to be 'R'—it's not going to show anything graphic—but it's a little bit more adult content on the type of stories that are going to be told. I think 'Fathom' is going to be the one they really flex their muscle on."

Turner agrees, particularly where the animation's concerned. "I think it's going to be a high-end animation with a grittier style than you've seen in classical, say Disney-style animation and such. It's not going to be a musical, she's not going to be swimming with dolphins. We're not going for talking sea-horses or anything!"

The latest computer-generated imagery (CGI) animation will be used to achieve the spectacular action sequences the mysterious heroine Aspen finds herself in. "They really do plan on mixing the two," Turner said of Fox's intentions. "All the craft and underwater and above water type amphibious jets will be CGI, and a lot of the water effects I'm sure too, with classical animation mixed in." Ideally, he imagines the film's water effects rivaling the sequence in DreamWorks' "Prince of Egypt" where Moses parts the Red Sea.

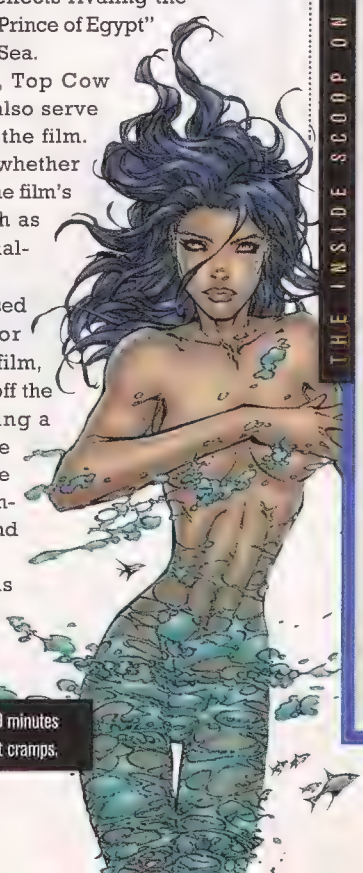
Along with Foxhoven, Top Cow CEO **Marc Silvestri** will also serve as executive producer on the film. Fox is currently deciding whether to hire Top Cow to deliver the film's pre-production work, such as storyboards and conceptualization artwork.

Since the comic can be used as a launching point for designing the look of the film, months have been shaved off the designing process, making a summer 2002 release date quite likely. Currently, the studio is selecting a screenwriter to adapt the comic and considering directors.

As for plot, "Fathom" is based on the first nine-issue story arc of the comic series. "Plus we took some elements from the second and third arcs," Turner said, "things that I'm not going to reveal until issue #25. I threw them into the movie just because you need to get some of those things out there."

Obviously excited about his sweetheart deal, Turner wants to ensure that the film will be able to capture the essence of what drew readers to the book. "I'm probably going to be more involved than they want me to be! I'm going to stick my nose into everything because this is something that I've been working on for three-and-a-half years. But I'm not going to be stupid about it either. If there are people with great ideas I'm definitely going to want them. They'll know more about animation than I do.

"The most important thing right now is finding a good script, getting a good writer, and making sure that the story has all the potential to be big," Turner added. "That's the goal I'm looking for—something epic." ■ **PATRICK SAURIOL**



BABEWATCH Remember, kids: Wait 30 minutes after eating before diving in. Or you'll get cramps.

HOLLYWOOD BUZZ

THE INSIDE SCOOP ON THE HOLLYWOOD SCENE

"TROOPERS" TOONS! Sony Pictures is hard at work developing an all-CGI animated series for the fall spun off from the "Starship Troopers" movie. Word is we'll get to see the survivors from the 1997 film in the series, as well as elements from Robert Heinlein's novel such as mobile power armor suits and another alien species known as Skinnies.

"FINAL FANTASY" A DREAM? Hinrobu Sakaguchi, Square Soft vice-president and director of the upcoming "Final Fantasy" movie recently revealed his film was about 25 percent complete. But reports are surfacing that the film is taking longer than expected, and that's giving headaches to the Square Soft guys who already invested 70 million bucks. To create five minutes of movie requires one month of animation time, so don't expect to see the movie anytime before summer 2001.

FINAL FANTASY

EARTHWORM MONKEYS! The creator of Earthworm Jim, Doug Ten Napel is reportedly working on a new mature animated film for Vanguard Films and DreamWorks SKG called "The Monkey Prince." Apparently, a test group of lab monkeys accidentally receive godlike psionic powers. Woo hoo!

BUGGING TOY STORY! Pixar gave us the classic "Toy Story," "A Bug's Life" and this November's "Toy Story 2." But there's already been development on the next Pixar project, codenamed "Hidden City." According to our sources, the project's real title is "Monsters, Inc." and it's all about a group of real-life beasties that dwell under a kid's bed. ■ **PS**

HELLHOLE Ol' Spawny guy will learn more about his past and hang around the tops of creepy old churches.

SPAWNING A NEW SEASON

HBO's animated 'Spawn' hits third round

Come midnight, there'll be hell to pay. And that's just how Spawn creator **Todd McFarlane** wants things.

The new season of the animated "Spawn" debuts at the stroke of midnight, May 23 on HBO, with five more new episodes airing on consecutive days at midnight. Fans of the gritty, adult-oriented series can catch up when the complete seasons one and two air in midnight marathons on May 20-21 respectively.

Season three's new episodes will venture deeper into the darkness that surrounds Al Williams, the resurrected and transformed CIA operative now known as Spawn (voiced by **Keith David**, "Armageddon"). "This season of 'Spawn' is more like 'N.Y.P.D. Blue' or 'Homicide,'" co-producer **Terry Fitzgerald** said. "Viewers can expect a lot more mystery, suspense and complex storylines. It's more of the cool things you want to see out of life."

Look for tensions to rise during a search for the party responsible for a string of murders in Spawn's alley, which in turn reveals the truth about Simmons' murder and Spawn's human identity. Spawn will learn quite a bit from the enigmatic Cogliostro (voiced by **Richard Dysart**, "LA Law"), and start using more of his supernatural powers to shapeshift and communicate with the dead. Then there's monumental changes for a returning character, a startling revelation about another and the introduction of the comic's Celestial Warriors. **Robert Forster** ("Jackie Brown"), **Eric Roberts** ("Runaway Train") and **Jennifer Jason Leigh** ("eXistenZ") provide guest voices this season.

"This year, the show looks bigger and better than ever," Fitzgerald enthused. "We've doubled our budget. We also found two new animation houses based out of Tokyo, Japan who've done incredible work. It looks amazing." ■ PS

CAUGHT IN THE 'MATRIX'

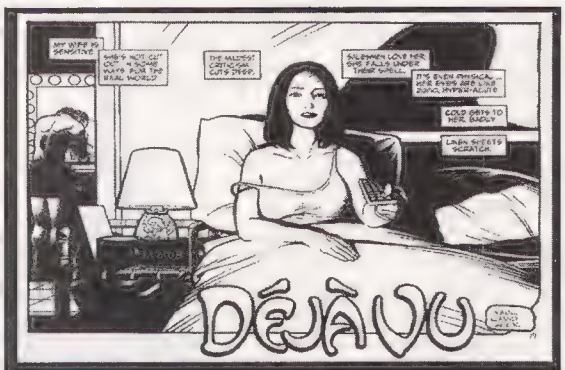
Gaiman, Darrow bring sci-fi comic back to online realm

In **Keanu Reeves**' latest sci-fi film "**The Matrix,**" human beings have become one with computers. But if you surf this movie's Web site you'll see how comic books have merged with the machine.

No less than 10 original works have been created for the film's Web site, located at www.whatisthematrix.com. The material ranges from short stories complete with illustrations to fully colored (and, in some cases, painted) comic book pages, all available for free just a mouse click away. And the assembled roster of comic creators ain't just your regular hacks. **Neil Gaiman**, **Geof Darrow**, **Moebius**, **Tim Sale** and **Steve Skroce** are just some of the many working on 120 pages of material set in the "Matrix" universe.

"Basically, I was told we could use the premise of the film, but not the movie's characters or give away any of the movie's secrets," said **Paul Chadwick** (*Concrete*), who's contributed an 11-page black-and-white story for the project. "The idea of doing comics on the 'net greatly intrigued me."

In addition to hosting the material on the "Matrix" Web site, 500,000 copies of a free 16-page comic book showcasing Chadwick's story were handed out to theaters shortly before the film's opening. The Web site will continue releasing new material even after the movie comes out, including stories written by the film's directors and illustrated by Darrow and Skroce, who played a key part in the actual film.



WEBBED FEAT Surf the Internet for comics by Gaiman, Darrow, Chadwick (above) and more, based on the funky sci-fi flick "The Matrix."

"Steve's a big reason why the film got made," Spencer Lamm, editor of the comic and "Matrix" Web site producer, said. "He did the storyboards for the film, 500 of them, before the thing ever happened, and Geof [Darrow] did all the visualizations and production design." Lamm promised that fans of Darrow's unique hyper-kinetic drawing style will love the exotic "Matrix" world. "Wait until you see the sets of the film. You're going to go in and get a live-action Geof Darrow film." ■ PS

STAR WARS PREQUEL WATCH

NEW STARDATE: MAY 19, 1999

STAR WARS EPISODE I THE PHANTOM MENACE

THE FINAL COUNTDOWN

EARLY BIRD The Force is with the fans, as George Lucas recently announced that "Episode I: The Phantom Menace" will open on May 19, two days earlier than originally scheduled. "The fans will get a little head start, and families can see it on the first weekend," Lucas said at this year's ShoWest movie convention.

WEB SITE MADNESS Once again, a mere movie trailer has sent fans into a frenzy. The second "Episode I: The Phantom Menace" trailer (at roughly 2 1/2 minutes), forced people to theaters in droves and counted some one million downloads from the official Star Wars Web site (www.starwars.com) within 24 hours of it being posted.

THE PHANTOM MENACE By now, you've seen a glimpse of the sinister duo in "The Phantom Menace"–Darths Sidious and Maul. Sidious is the real "phantom menace" threatening the Republic and Jedi Council, but we never learn his true identity. We only see him as a hologram who masterminds the Trade Federation's invasion of Naboo, and can only guess from his appearance that he's a younger version of the Emperor from "Return of the Jedi." For now, his true identity will remain a riddle that promises to be fully revealed in the following two prequels.

As for the demonic-looking Maul, all we really know is that he's Sidious' apprentice and wields a funky double-bladed red lightsaber staff. After Queen Amidala, Obi-Wan and Qui-Gon flee Naboo to hide on Tatooine, Sidious sends Maul after them and the Jedi that protects her.

ENTERTAINING READ In a recent issue of *Entertainment Weekly*, George Lucas finally crawled out from his secluded hideout and spilled some beans on "The Phantom Menace." In case you missed this exclusive interview with the Star Wars director, here's some of the highlights:

• A pessimistic Lucas would be surprised if "Phantom Menace" makes more than $400 million in its initial North American run. But he's happy with the result. "It's the movie I've always wanted to see but had never been able to make," Lucas said.

• The film's climactic battle scene features 3,000 computer-generated alien infantrymen taking on 4,000 battle droids.

• Of the film's 2,200 or so shots, only about 300 do NOT involve F/X or some kind of post-production digital trickery.

• Lucas stated that as of last November, when the initial trailer was shown, "Eighty percent of everything on the Web was completely bogus." But since that time, film details have been stolen or leaked. "It's out," admitted Lucas. Some Web sites such as www.jedinet.com include detailed scene descriptions and even some dialogue.

• During desert location shooting in Tunisia in 1997, temperatures reached as high as 140 degrees. A torrential rainstorm hit and became a monsoon, with winds that destroyed almost all of the outdoor sets built for the film's Mos Espa street scenes and the big pod race sequence. Jet engines weighing 3,000 pounds were tossed around. One of the crew tents "landed in Kenya," according to producer Rick McCallum. Lucas took it as a good omen since almost the same thing happened some 20 years earlier on the set of the original "Star Wars."

■ PS AND JOHN B. LACEY

EPISODE I PHOTOS © LUCASFILM LTD. & ™. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. PHOTO BY KEITH HAMSHERE

ANIMATED ASSASSIN

Rude and Baron's 'Nexus' blasts to small screen

Move over "Cops," there's a new law enforcement agent coming to television. And this one uses deadly force.

Comic creators **Mike Baron** and **Steve Rude** recently signed a deal with Sony/Columbia Tristar for an animated TV series based on their *Nexus* comic book. Most recently published as a series of mini-series from Dark Horse Comics, *Nexus* tells the tale of Horatio Hellpop (Nexus), a cosmic hero gifted (or plagued, depending on your point of view) with vast powers and the reluctant role of galactic assassin.

"Nexus is a great character with a lot of appeal, which is why we optioned it," Bob Higgins, vice president of creative affairs for Sony/Columbia Tristar said. "We see the show being aimed at boys aged 6-to-11, and hope to get older kids interested as well."

One problem with the initial concept? Nexus uses power blasts to execute villains.

Naturally, that aspect of the character has raised some eyebrows. Especially considering its target audience.

"[Sony/Columbia Tristar] want the blasts to send people to a place where they're not really dead," Rude revealed. "At first, I was feeling distressed because they wouldn't let me kill people, but then I decided we can make the place that the people go to actually worse than if they were dead."

Under the terms of the contract, Rude has been named the "show runner," which means he will play an active role in all aspects of "Nexus'" animated production, helping to keep it close to its comic book roots. The classic Hanna-Barbera animation style has been a strong influence of Rude's. "Steve wants to create the feeling of classic TV animation, but with modern animation values," affirmed Higgins. Comic writer Baron's involvement will include story editing and writing.

As for a release date or network, well, that's still a ways off. Sony now has to sell "Nexus" to a network such as Fox Kids and then put it on a schedule.

"This is a dream I've been trying to realize for 10 years," Rude said.

"I have one overriding reason for doing this, and that's to get the animated 'Nexus' on TV, and to get it done right." ■ JANET HETHERINGTON

BLAST IT "Nexus" is a network away from hitting the big screen...and the galaxy's toughest fashion critics.

VIDPICK

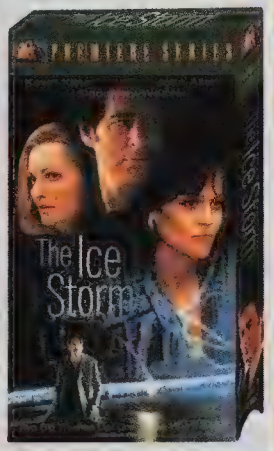
IF YOU LIKE COMICS, CHECK THIS OUT

THE ICE STORM (1997, R)

KEY PLAYERS Kevin Kline, Sigourney Weaver, Elijah Wood and Christina Ricci

THE DOPE Yeah, it's one of those dysfunctional family films in the god-awful '70s, but a treacherous ice storm and a wife-swapping "key" party (Woo hoo!) keep this one interesting. But the real reasons to watch this flick are the scrumptious Joey (Katie Holmes) from "Dawson's Creek" passing out in a guy's lap, Wood getting electrocuted and Ricci nailing Wood's pre-pubescent younger brother!

COMIC CONNECTION Throughout the film, Ricci's brother reads an old issue of the *Fantastic Four* while on a train ride home from college. He talks about Annihilus, the Negative Zone and all four members of Marvel's First Family.



CARTOON CLERKS

Kevin Smith shops prime-time animated slackers series to ABC in 2000

Ring up another item for movie and comic sensation **Kevin Smith**. He's now in the cartoon biz.

"Clerks," based on Smith's 1994 cult-classic movie of the same name, hits the small screen in January as a prime-time ABC cartoon. Six episodes are planned, with an option for more. "If ABC digs it, they'll be back for a full season of 22," Smith said.

The series, which follows clerks Dante and Randal through their misadventures in retail, is planned as first-class all the way. Smith will co-write along with "Chasing Amy" producer Scott Mosier and Dave Mandel, a former "Seinfeld" writer. Original movie actors Brian O'Halloran (Dante) and Jeff Anderson (Randal) will provide voices. And all art is based on the drawings of **Jim Mahfood**, who has two *Clerks* comic under his belt.

Put it all together, and Smith is a happy man. "We've made it," he said. "It's every boy's dream, ain't it? A cartoon of their own." ■ JIM McLAUCHLIN

MALL BRATS Dante (left) and Randal

TRAILERS...

"X-MEN" IN GREAT WHITE NORTH?

Rumors of an "X-Men" movie scouting party in Toronto were recently confirmed. Seems members from the Fox were scouting possible locations for Magneto's base at an impressive educational facility called Science North, located near Sudbury, Ontario. They also looked at the nearby nickel mines and a large cavern located close to Science North for scenes that take place underground.

WOLVERINE smells bacon

"POKÉMON" PICTURES Warner Brothers is seeking to acquire the worldwide theatrical rights to a Japanese full-length animated "Pokémon" movie. The film, which has already debuted in Japan, is made up from two separate films titled "Pikachu's Summer Vacation" and the longer "Mewtwo Strikes Back." WB would rescore and redub the film for English-speaking audiences and probably retitle it simply "Pokémon" for a summer or Christmas '99 release date.

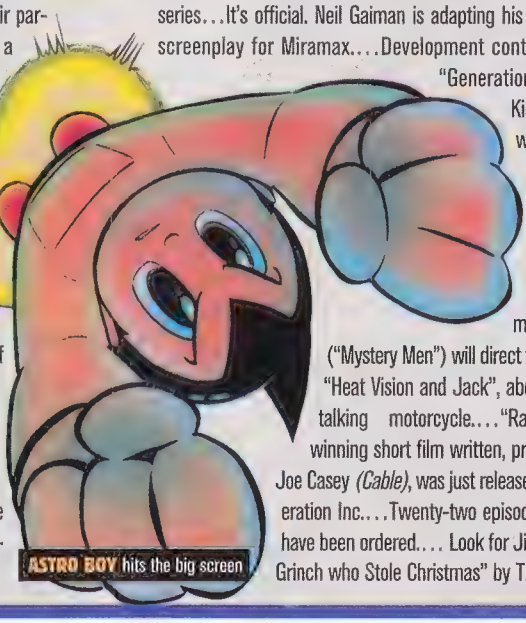
PIKACHU learns English

SHARPENING "BLADE 2" Now that New Line Cinema has given screenwriter David Goyer the go-ahead to write the "Blade" sequel, how's it coming along? "I met with Wesley [Snipes] and ended up getting inspired," he said. "Morbius will no longer be involved. It involves Blade being forced to team up with the vampires in order to take down an even greater menace. I'm having a blast writing it."

SILVESTRI'S PET "PROJECT" Top Cow founder Marc Silvestri is writing the movie screenplay for "The Project." When three young adults start manifesting mind abilities, they realize their parents were part of a secret experiment conducted by a mysterious government agency. "Rather than sequels of the film, we'll just do the film as this elaborate theatrical pilot and then launch it as a TV series," Silvestri explained.

ASTRO BOY Everyone's favorite robot kid, Astro Boy, may be hitting the big screen in Christmas 2000 courtesy of Columbia Pictures. In the final negotiations stage, "Astro Boy" may combine CGI with animatronics and live-action. Astro Boy tells the tale of a grieving scientist who constructs a robot with extraordinary powers in the image of his son.

ARCHIE ON THE MOVE That live-action "Archie" movie that was optioned by Universal is still moving along with Ben Myron ("Mod Squad") producing. The script is currently going through rewrites and is scheduled to be in theaters the summer of 2000.

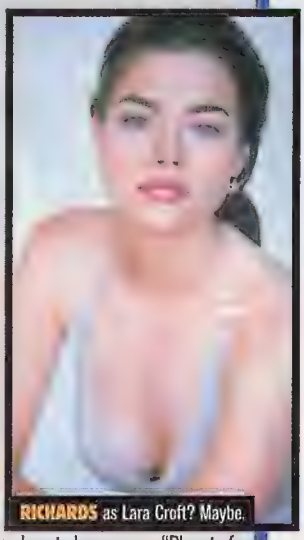


ASTRO BOY hits the big screen

"BATTLESTAR GALACTICA" REVIVAL? The original "Battlestar Galactica" film was made in the wake of the first "Star Wars" movie, so it should be no surprise that on the eve of "The Phantom Menace," plans for a new "Galactica" film have been announced. Series creator Glen A. Larson and producer Todd Moyer ("Wing Commander") are collaborating on the project, which is to follow the mission of Commander Cain (Lloyd Bridges in the TV series) of the Battlestar *Pegasus* in search of the *Galactica*'s route to Earth. Original "Galactica" series star Richard Hatch has also independently developed plans for an all-new TV series using a different premise.

BATTLESTAR GALACTICA lives agains?

SHORT TAKES Warner Home Video is releasing the ultra-cool one-hour "Batman Beyond" pilot on video May 18. Plus, 52 additional episodes have been ordered for next fall, with the show airing weekdays as well as Saturday mornings....Word on the street is that J.F. Lawton ("Pretty Woman") has finished a script for Howard Stern's next possible movie "Fartman." ...Paramount may be considering Denise Richards ("Starship Troopers") as Lara Croft for the "Tomb Raider" movie....Fox announced its plans to have a new "Planet of the Apes" film in theaters by summer 2001....Guillermo Del Toro ("Mimic") is in talks to write and direct "Domu" for Disney and producer Don Murphy, based on the classic Japanese comic....A computer-animated "Elfquest" film is in the works based on the WaRP Graphics comic series...It's official. Neil Gaiman is adapting his "Stardust" novel into a screenplay for Miramax....Development continues on a live-action "Generation X" TV series for Fox Kids....Ghostface returns when "Scream 3" hits on December 10th....Tia Carrere recently appeared on the "Howie Mandel" show talking about the "Shi" movie....Ben Stiller ("Mystery Men") will direct the pilot episode of Fox's "Heat Vision and Jack", about a superhero and his talking motorcycle....."Rapscallions," the award-winning short film written, produced and directed by Joe Casey *(Cable)*, was just released on video by Next Generation Inc....Twenty-two episodes of Fox's "The P.J.s" have been ordered.... Look for Jim Carrey to star in "The Grinch who Stole Christmas" by Thanksgiving 2000. ■ PS



RICHARDS as Lara Croft? Maybe.

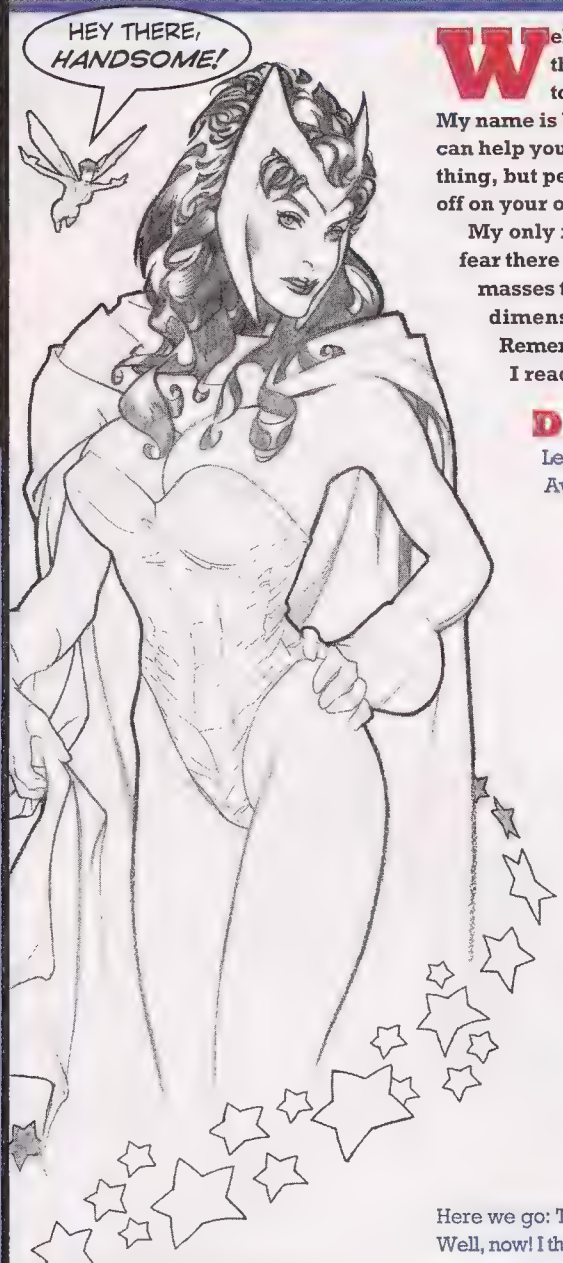
DENISE RICHARDS PHOTO BY J. CRAIG HENRY COURTESY OF OUTLINE.

BASIC TRAINING

ADAM HUGHES (and friends) SHOW YOU

THIS MONTH'S SPECIAL INSTRUCTOR

HOW TO MAKE YOUR HEROINES SULTRY



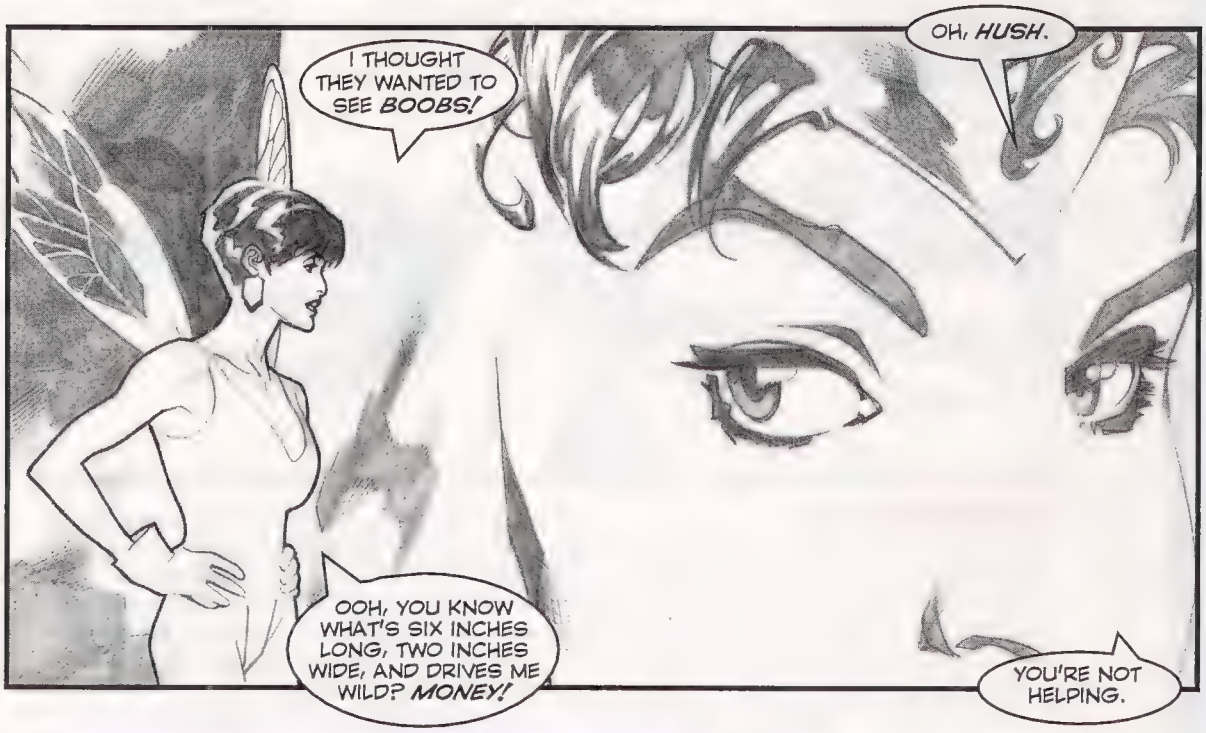
Well, hello! An aspiring young artist, I see! Do you think you've got it? Have you the mutant ability to make your heroines sultry? My name is Wanda, and this is my friend Janet. If anyone can help you find an answer, it should be us! We can't teach you everything, but perhaps we can open a door or two for you that will send you off on your own personal journey into a much bigger world...

My only request is that you use what you've learned here wisely. I fear there are more artists out there who merely wish to pander to the masses than those who wish to create very attractive, yet very three-dimensional and believable feminine comic book characters. Remember—with great power comes great responsibility! I believe I read that somewhere...

DEFINITIONS

Let's see...the *Webster's New World Dictionary* here in the library at Avengers Mansion describes sultry as "oppressively hot and moist."

Here we go: The second definition is "hot or inflamed, as with passion or lust." Well, now! I think that's what the *Wizard* boys invited us here to discuss. Wouldn't you agree?



The problem is that, like art or music, it all sounds rather subjective, doesn't it? What you find sultry is probably very far afield from what I find as such. I'm sure none of you find androids attractive, do you!

I believe the most important aspect of sultriness I can impart to you—before we get to a few universal tips—is that it really has nothing to do with how a character looks! That's right. How a woman looks is quite often the least important ingredient in her witch's brew of sultriness. That's because sultriness is a character trait. It comes from within. It's an aspect of personality, not appearance. If your character isn't sultry at heart, no amount of lipstick and cleavage will change that!

Also, do me a kindness and please remember not to make all your female characters sultry. I know it's tempting, but if every lady in your comic is a passionate, lusty bad girl, well then, not one among them will stand out…will they? Of course not!

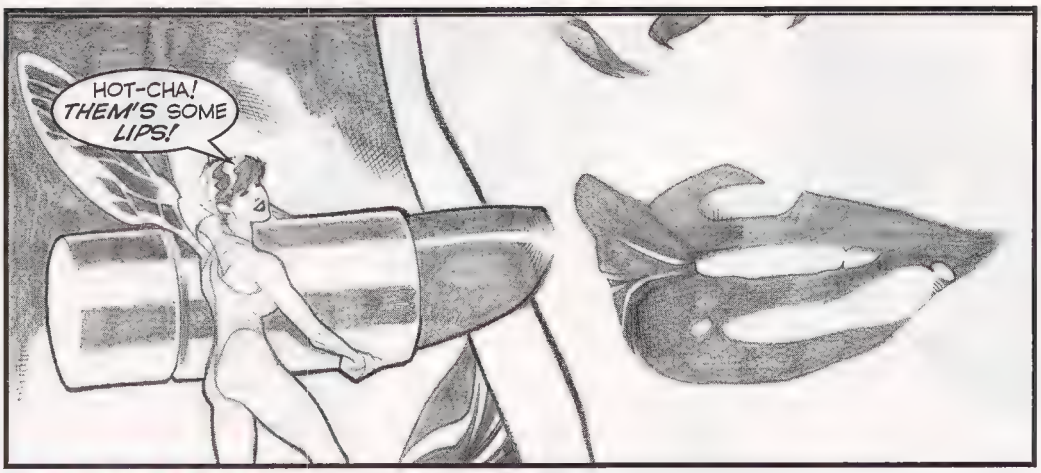
Well now, I could spend all day talking and fill this entire issue with a lot of theory, but that's not what you ripped open the polybag for, is it? I shall assume that you already know how to draw a woman, and are ready for a few bits of advice that seem to work for virtually everyone.

FACE IT

When drawing faces, try not to over-render. Too many lines clutter up a lady's face, and can even be mistaken for wrinkles.

Practice accentuating the eyebrows, eyelashes and lips, while de-emphasizing the features which can make a woman seem too harsh—like cheekbones and noses. Thicker, fuller eyebrows can really add to a sultry expression, especially when they have a slight arch to them. If you draw the lid covering the top part of the eye, it can heighten an already sultry expression!

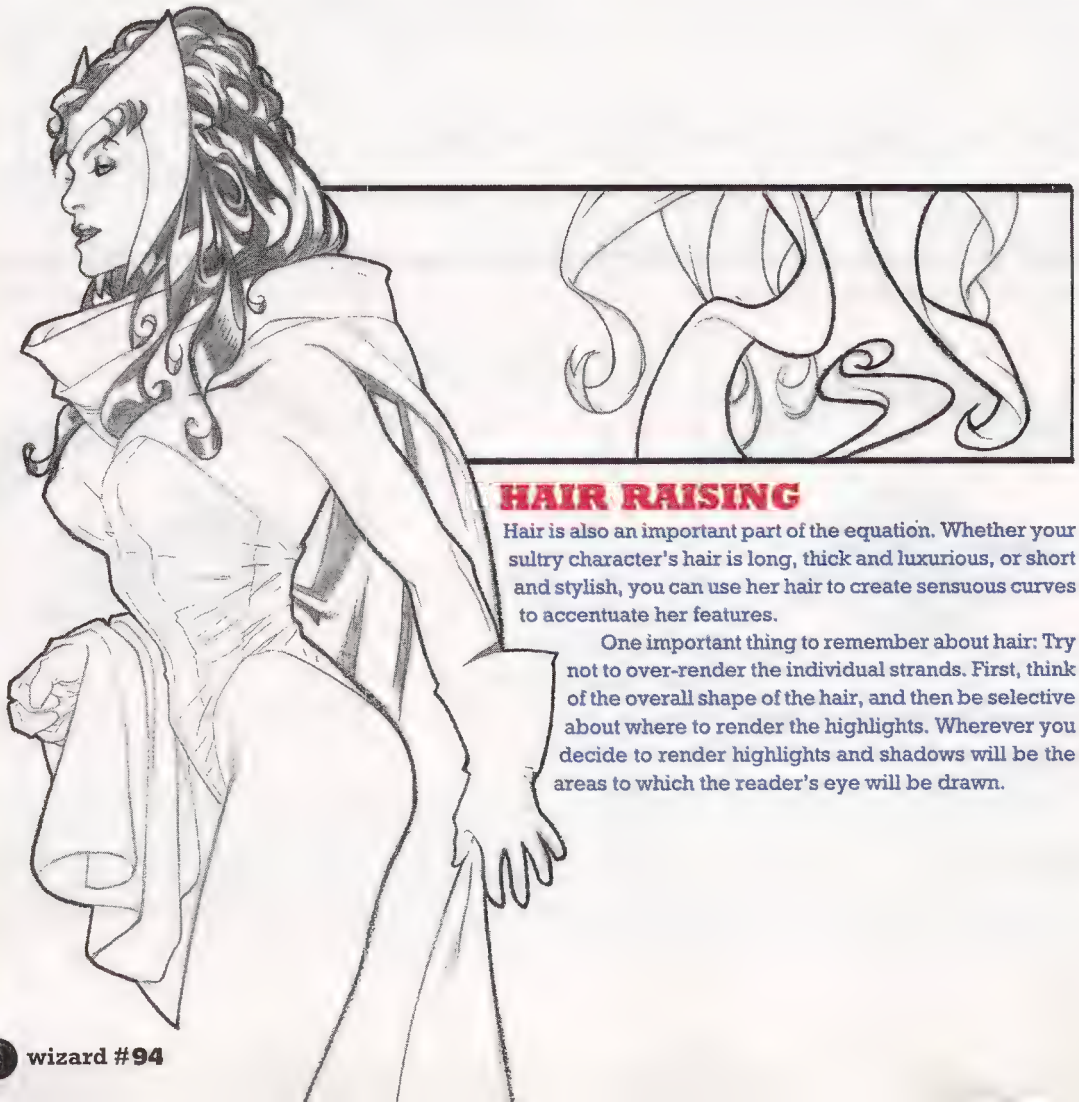
This won't help in panel-to-panel continuity, but it works wonderfully on covers: eye contact! When a reader feels that the lady on the comic is looking at him and no one else in the shop, it works wonders!



PUCKER UP

There are many different ways to draw lips, but one tried-and-true way to give them a sensuous look is to draw them black, with little highlights on the top and bottom lips. This makes them seem deep and moist, which I've been told is very sultry!

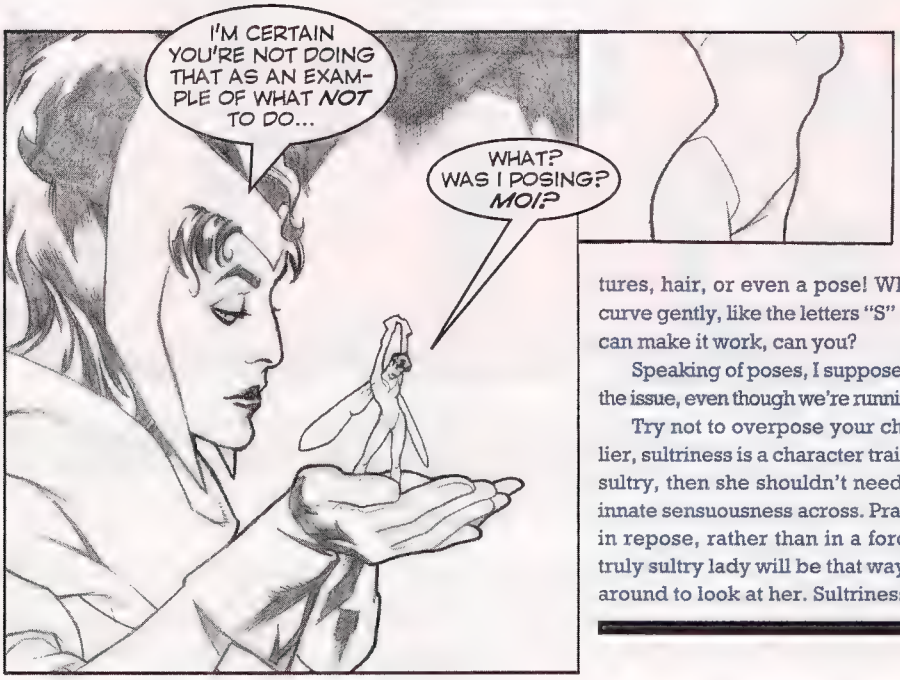
Thank you, Janet, for draining the last bit of austerity out of the proceedings. It is important to note, however, that less really is more when trying to render a truly sultry expression. Even if your favorite artist does it, I heartily recommend that you abstain from over-rendering a face. You won't become better by drawing one face for hours and hours; try spending those hours drawing as many faces as possible. Remember, you have to fail at something quite a few times before you can start to succeed at it.



HAIR RAISING

Hair is also an important part of the equation. Whether your sultry character's hair is long, thick and luxurious, or short and stylish, you can use her hair to create sensuous curves to accentuate her features.

One important thing to remember about hair: Try not to over-render the individual strands. First, think of the overall shape of the hair, and then be selective about where to render the highlights. Wherever you decide to render highlights and shadows will be the areas to which the reader's eye will be drawn.



BODY TALK

If you practice enough, you'll notice that almost all the lines you use to draw a sultry woman are smooth, soft and curvaceous. Try not to use many hard angles, whether drawing facial features, hair, or even a pose! When drawing, use lines that curve gently, like the letters "S" or "C." Try it...not everyone can make it work, can you?

Speaking of poses, I suppose we ought to at least address the issue, even though we're running out of space rather quickly!

Try not to overpose your characters. As we stated earlier, sultriness is a character trait; if your heroine is naturally sultry, then she shouldn't need to strike a pose to get her innate sensuousness across. Practice drawing sultry women in repose, rather than in a forced posture. Remember, a truly sultry lady will be that way naturally, even if no one is around to look at her. Sultriness should never be an act.

DON'T BE A BOOB

Finally, I feel the need to discuss the...ahem...Zen and Tao of endowments. Many of you may think me a bit of a hypocrite when I tell you that the size of a woman's chest has little to do with a woman's attractiveness, but it is the truest thing I say to you today.

If bigger is truly better...

Uhh...with that said, I think we shall take our leave of you. I sincerely hope that you are one of the few who shall grow as an artist, and someday make some magic happen. (Hey, Janet...who drew that for you, anyway?)

The Scarlet Witch and the Wasp are card-carrying members of the Avengers, as well as being respected superheroines in their own right. Adam Hughes had nothing to do with any of this. Honest.

Drawing Board

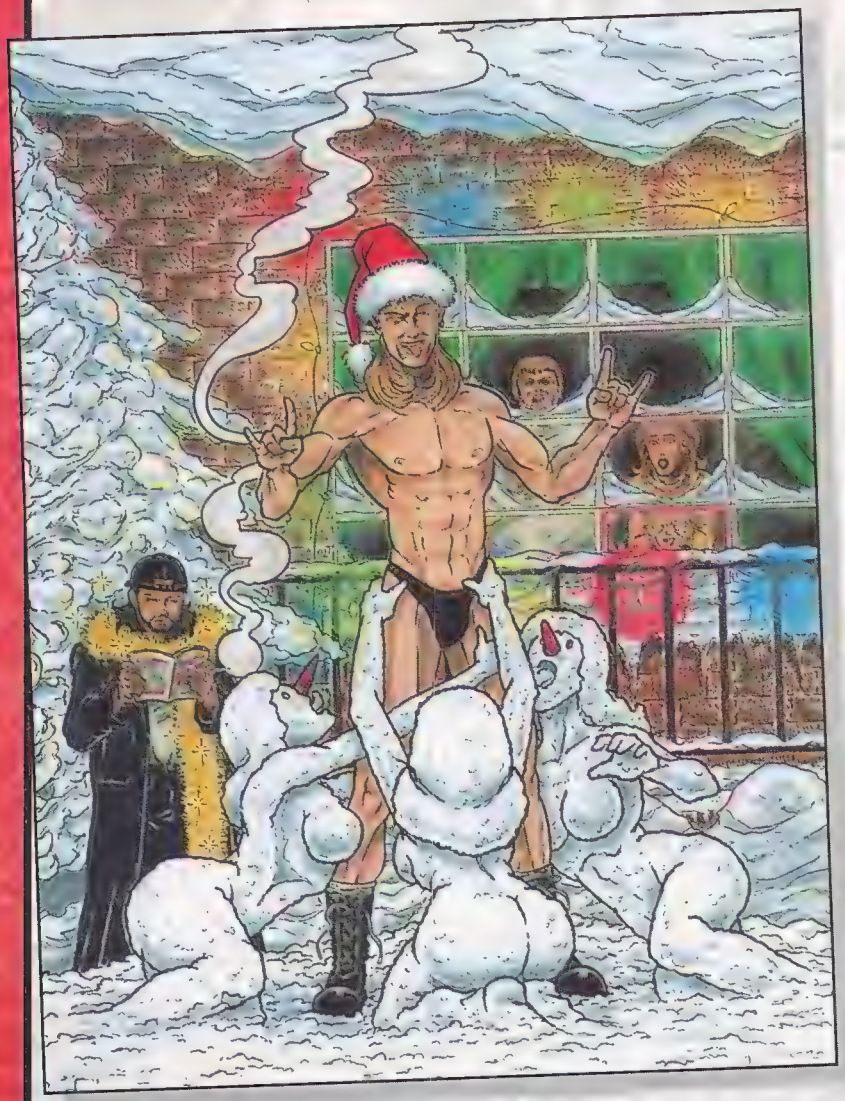
Who needs the pros? This is the show for WIZARD READERS' ART

Have yourself a snootchie little Christmas and a bootchie New Year! In *Wizard* #90, we asked you Kevin Smith fans out there to draw those miscreant potheads Jay and Silent Bob (from Smith's films "Clerks," "Mallrats" and "Chasing Amy") duded up for the holiday season.

Quicker than you can unwrap a present, entries began pouring in for our "Spend the Holidays With Jay and Silent Bob!" contest. After intensive study—and a few swigs from the old distillery—we picked the best and funniest entries.

The grand-prize winner trots home with a slew of Kevin Smith-related merchandise, including copies of Smith's three movies, signed comics, action figures and other cool swag. The other prize winners haul off some Smithtastic treats too.

Thanks to everyone who sent in entries. We enjoyed looking at every one—so keep drawing 'em.



GRAND-PRIZE WINNER

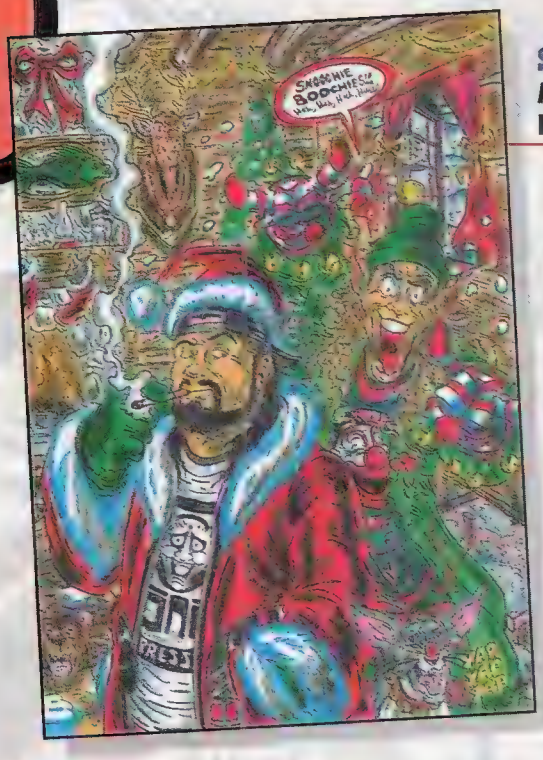
THIS ONE CAUGHT OUR EYE

JAY'S DELIGHT

Tony Perna

Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

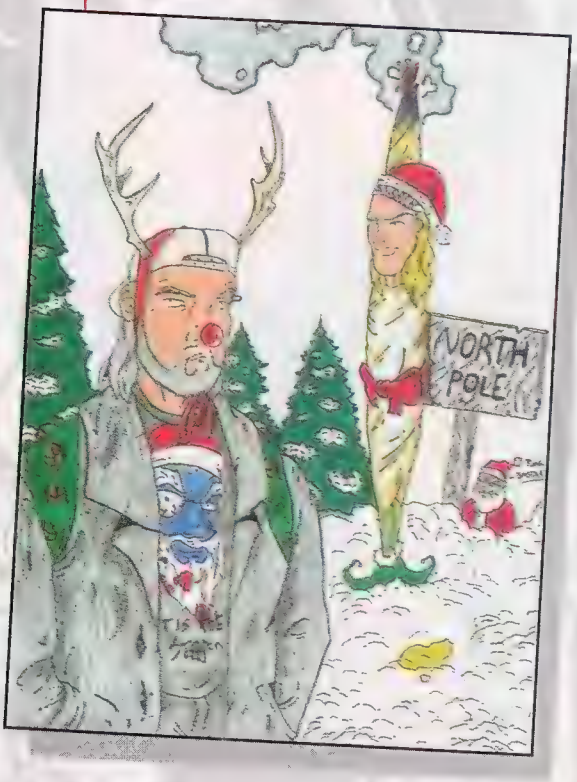
THE BOOTY



SANTA'S LITTLE HELPERS
Austin L. Brooks
Monmouth, Ill.

SANTA BOB
Sebastian Von Esch
Dalmkey, Saskatchewan, Canada

REINDEER GAMES
Karl D. Worthey
Macheshey Park, Ill.



Want your art to appear on one of these two pages in future issues? Think you've got what it takes? (Hey—quality *and* originality count, y'know.) Then send your "Drawing Board" entries to:

SUBMIT!

Drawing Board
c/o Wizard Entertainment
151 Wells Avenue
Congers, NY 10920-2064

And follow these rules or else: Use any form of unlined paper or posterboard (no larger than 8 inches by 11 1/4 inches) and any medium (oils, crayon, mustard, etc.—but not neon inks). Put your name, full address and TELEPHONE NUMBER on the back of your piece, and mail it flat to avoid damage. **You must also include a color photo of yourself.** All entries are non-returnable and become the property of Wizard Entertainment. Employees of Wizard Entertainment are the sole judges of the contests, and all decisions are final. Got it? All right, good luck!

SIRIUS ENTERTAINMENT PRESENTS:

ART CONTEST

Battle-Ready Dawn!

PRIZES

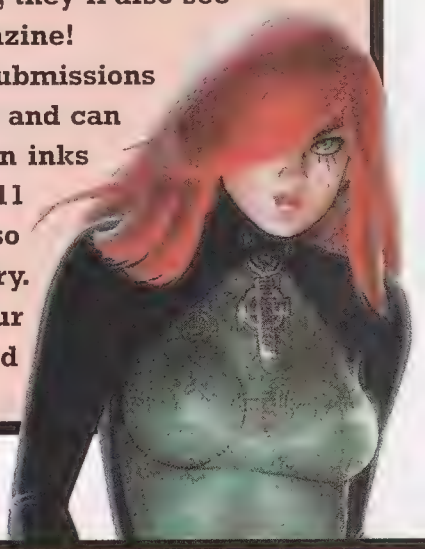
GRAND PRIZE (1): One warrior wins an original Dawn sketch by Joseph Michael Linsner, a copy of the *Dawn* hardcover and a complete set of Dawn: Another Card Set in a binder with all chase cards including a Linsner autographed card.

FIRST PRIZE (4): Four soldiers each win a complete set of Dawn: Another Card Set in a binder with all chase cards including a Joseph Michael Linsner autographed card and *Dawn* #1-#6 signed by Linsner.

In *Dawn: Return of the Goddess*, Dawn is an avenging angel out for retribution. And every good avenging angel needs to be prepared for battle. What we need you to do is DRAW A "BATTLE-READY" DAWN. Dress her up in armor, chain mail, Kevlar, or whatever you feel makes an avenging angel battle-ready. Just make sure her costume looks totally bad-ass. And make sure to give her a good weapon for her fight.

From all the entries, we'll choose the most creative and cool-looking as the winners. And not only will they win great prizes, they'll also see their entries in an upcoming issue of this very magazine!

Keep these things in mind as you start drawing: Submissions can be on any form of unlined paper or posterboard and can be in any medium (oils, crayon, marker, etc.). Neon inks will not print. Artwork must not be larger than 8" X 11 1/4". Do not fold, bend or roll artwork. Mail flat. Also be sure to include two photos of yourself with the entry. Each photo (no Polaroids, please) should include your full name, date of birth, telephone number and address on the back.



SIRIUS®

THIS CONTEST IS SPONSORED BY SIRIUS ENTERTAINMENT, PURVEYOR OF SOME SERIOUS COMICS!

DAWN'S EARLY RIGHT

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Entertainment, Sirius Entertainment, their immediate families and people who don't like redheads. Don't knock it unt.ll you've tried it! Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip, e-mail address and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card, attach the form or card to your entry and include your two photos. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: "Battle-Ready Dawn" Art Contest, c/o Wizard Entertainment, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries and all rights thereto become property of Wizard Entertainment and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by June 25, 1999.** Wizard Entertainment is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Winners will be selected based on originality and creativity by Wizard Entertainment. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Winners will be notified no later than July 30, 1999. If an entrant, having been declared as a winner, does not accept the prize or the prize or prize notification is undeliverable, another entry will be selected and that person will be made to walk around school wearing Dawn's costume. In the event that a prize is not available or it becomes impossible for the sponsor to award the prize which has been designated, the sponsor retains the right to substitute a prize or product of equal value to the winner. Determination of whether a prize or product is of equal value is in the sole discretion of the sponsor. Winning entries will be selected on or about July 9, 1999.

For a list of winners, available after July 9, 1999, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: "Battle-Ready Dawn!" Art Contest Winners List, c/o Wizard Entertainment, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

ENTER NOW!

Fill this out, attach your entry and photos and put it all i
an envelope. Send it to:

"Battle-Ready Dawn!" Art Contest,
c/o Wizard Entertainment,
P.O. Box 118,
Congers, NY 10920-0118

"Battle-Ready Dawn!" Art Contest Entry Form

CONTEST DEADLINE JUNE 25, 1999!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

E-mail address _____

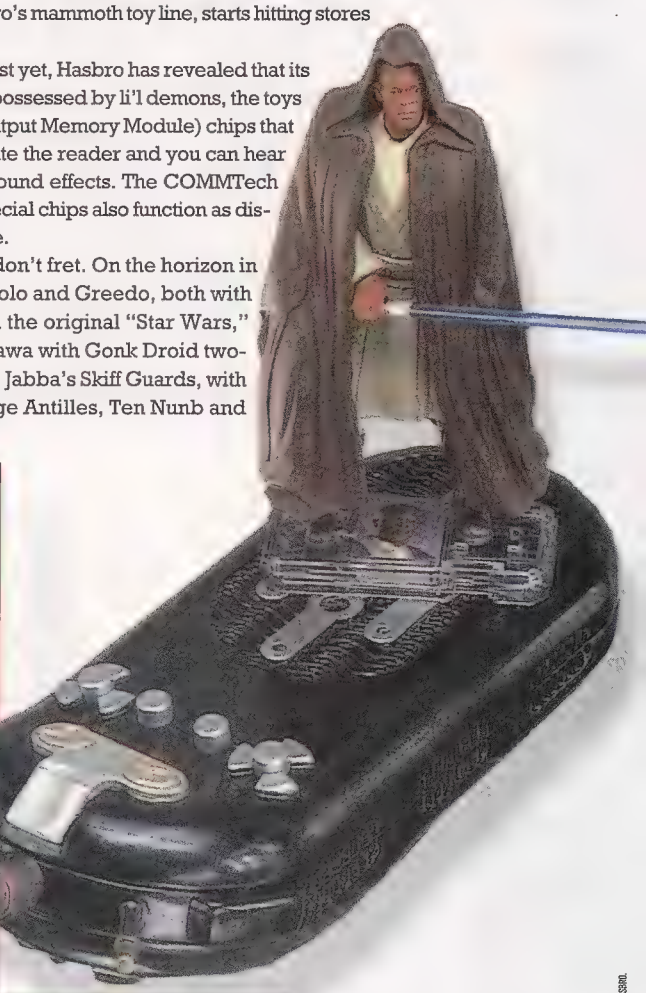
DID YOU ATTACH YOUR ENTRY AND PHOTOS?

'MENACE' TO TOY FANS

Break out the sleeping bags and start getting in line! The onslaught of "Star Wars: Episode I—The Phantom Menace" merchandise, including Hasbro's mammoth toy line, starts hitting stores on May 3.

While exact details on the action figure line aren't official just yet, Hasbro has revealed that its new Star Wars action figures will actually talk. No, they're not possessed by li'l demons, the toys come packaged with special COMMTech (Communication Output Memory Module) chips that can be scanned over a special reader, sold separately. Activate the reader and you can hear several lines of dialogue, as well as lightsaber and blaster sound effects. The COMMTech reader can hold lines for up to four figures at a time and the special chips also function as display stands that can be stored on a special ball-chain necklace.

If you've still got a hankerin' for classic Star Wars toys, don't fret. On the horizon in the Power of the Force line in '99 are new versions of Han Solo and Greedo, both with articulated knees to recreate their cantina showdown from the original "Star Wars," as well as Luke Skywalker with a miniature T-16 toy and a Jawa with Gonk Droid two-pack. There will also be two new Cinema Scene three-packs, Jabba's Skiff Guards, with Klaatu, Barada and Nikto, and Rebel Pilots, including Wedge Antilles, Ten Nunb and a nameless Y-wing pilot.

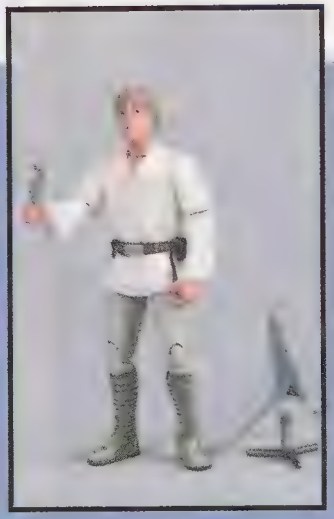


JABBERING JEDI With the special COMMTech reader (above), both Obi-Wan Kenobi (left) and Mace Windu (above) can chat up a storm.

PHOTOS BY PAUL SCHRADE

STAR WARS TOY PHOTOS COURTESY OF HASBRO.

BY TOM PALMER JR.



WARSIES Da Schwartz is in full effect with (clockwise, from top left) Greedo, Luke Skywalker, Han Solo, Jawa and a walking trashcan.

STAR WARS TOY PHOTOS COURTESY OF HASBRO.

SWEATIN' TO THE OLDIES

Sure, you'd expect toys that talk, but who could have predicted that there would be toys that *sweat*?

JAKKS Pacific, the company behind the huge line of WWF action figures, has unleashed The WWF Maximum Sweat figures which, as their name implies, will actually sweat. Just load the figures up with water, and they'll start sweatin', giving your favorite wrestling toys that extra level of realism. Not only does this line have a new action feature, but the figures are a visual departure as well—each figure is dynamically sculpted with exaggerated features and musculature. Look for Stone Cold Steve Austin, Undertaker, Kane, Hunter Hearst Helmsley and the Rock to hit toy stores in May.

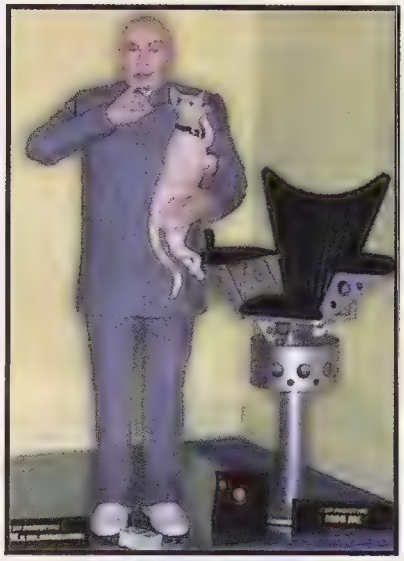
SWEAT SLAMMERS JAKKS serves up deformed versions of "Stone Cold" Steve Austin, The Undertaker and the Rock–and they sweat, too!

WWF FIGURES COURTESY OF JAKKS PACIFIC.

YEAH, BABY!

This shagadelic summer, McFarlane Toys looks to give shagadelic toy fans some truly shagadelic fun with its action figure line based on "Austin Powers 2: The Spy Who Shagged Me." Each figure will be packaged with lots of accessories and a special shagadelic base that recites several shagadelic catch-phrases. Shagadelic.

The line includes Austin Powers in his familiar duds, the nefarious Dr. Evil (With Mr. Biggelsworth!) and new groovy chick Felicity Shagwell. And last, but certainly not least, the toy line will include Austin Powers in his underwear. Ratty chest hair, sadly, is *not* sold separately.



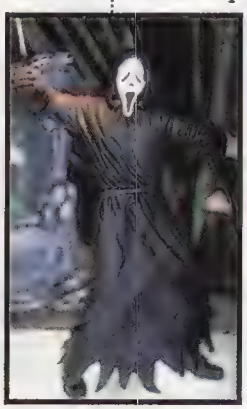
POWERFUL PLAYTHINGS Spy Austin Powers gets his own toy line with figures for (clockwise, from top left) Austin, Austin in his knickers, Felicity Shagwell and Dr. Evil.

AUSTIN POWERS FIGURE PHOTOS BY PAUL SCHIRALDI.

BOO!

It's gonna be an extra-special Halloween this fall, thanks to McFarlane Toys.

After the success of last year's Movie Maniacs line, McFarlane is planning several new additions inspired by some of the big screen's most-famous monsters. Toy fans will be haunting stores for the first-ever figures of Michael Myers from "Halloween," the killer from "Scream," Brandon Lee as the Crow, Chucky and his Bride from the sleeper hit "The Bride of Chucky," and the grotesque Pumpkinhead. Each figure will be accompanied by a special movie poster display base.

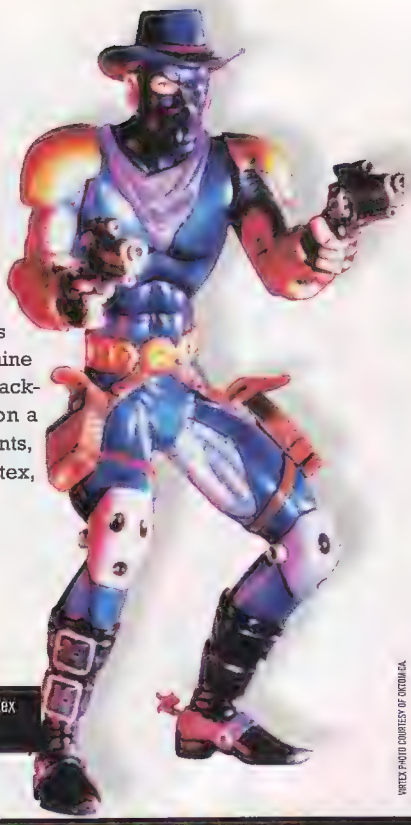


FATAL FIGURES From left: Mike Myers, Ghostface, Chucky the killer doll and his demented bride and the Crow.

MOVIE MANIACS FIGURE PHOTOS BY PAUL SCHIRALDI.

VIRTUAL COWPOKES

Yee-haw! Nothing's cooler than space cowboys, so naturally the first action figure release from new comic book publisher Oktomica is the futuristic lawman Virtex. This nifty-lookin' cowboy has a light-up eye, quick-draw action, nine points of articulation and comes packaged in a special window-box on a rotating base. Virtex and two variants, Shadowflage Virtex and Inviso-Virtex, arrive this summer.



HAVE GUN, WILL KILL Futuristic lawman Virtex comes with a light-up eye and a bad attitude.

VIRTEX PHOTO COURTESY OF OKTOMICA.

HOMEMADE VILLAINS OF THE MONTH

THE BEST OF FAN-MADE ACTION FIGURES

LEGION OF DOOM

Robert Sanceda, San Antonio, Texas

This here collection of super-baddies was made from all sorts of figures, ranging from Toy Biz's Silver Surfer to a figure from the almost-forgotten Captain Simian and the Space Monkeys.

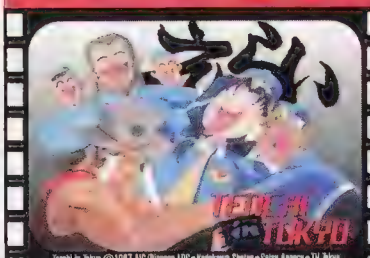
For all his hard work, Robert snags the first three issues of Dark Horse's *Sock Monkey*, an official Sock Monkey hat and a Sock Monkey toy doll signed by creator Tony Millionaire. Thanks to Dark Horse for these monkeylicious goodies.

THIS CONTEST SPOSORED BY DARK HORSE–TASTES GREAT AND LESS FILLING!

HEY! Do you want in on the fun? To enter the homemade figure contest, send at least TWO well-lit, clear, color photographs (No Polaroids, and put 'em in cool or funny poses!), along with your name, address, a DETAILED DESCRIPTION of how you created your figure, your full phone number (including area code) and even e-mail address to:

HOMEMADE HEROES
c/o Wizard Entertainment
P.O. Box 118
Congers, NY 10920-0118

It's Time to Laugh!!



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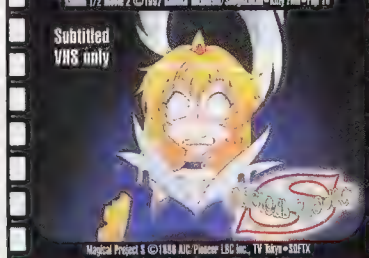

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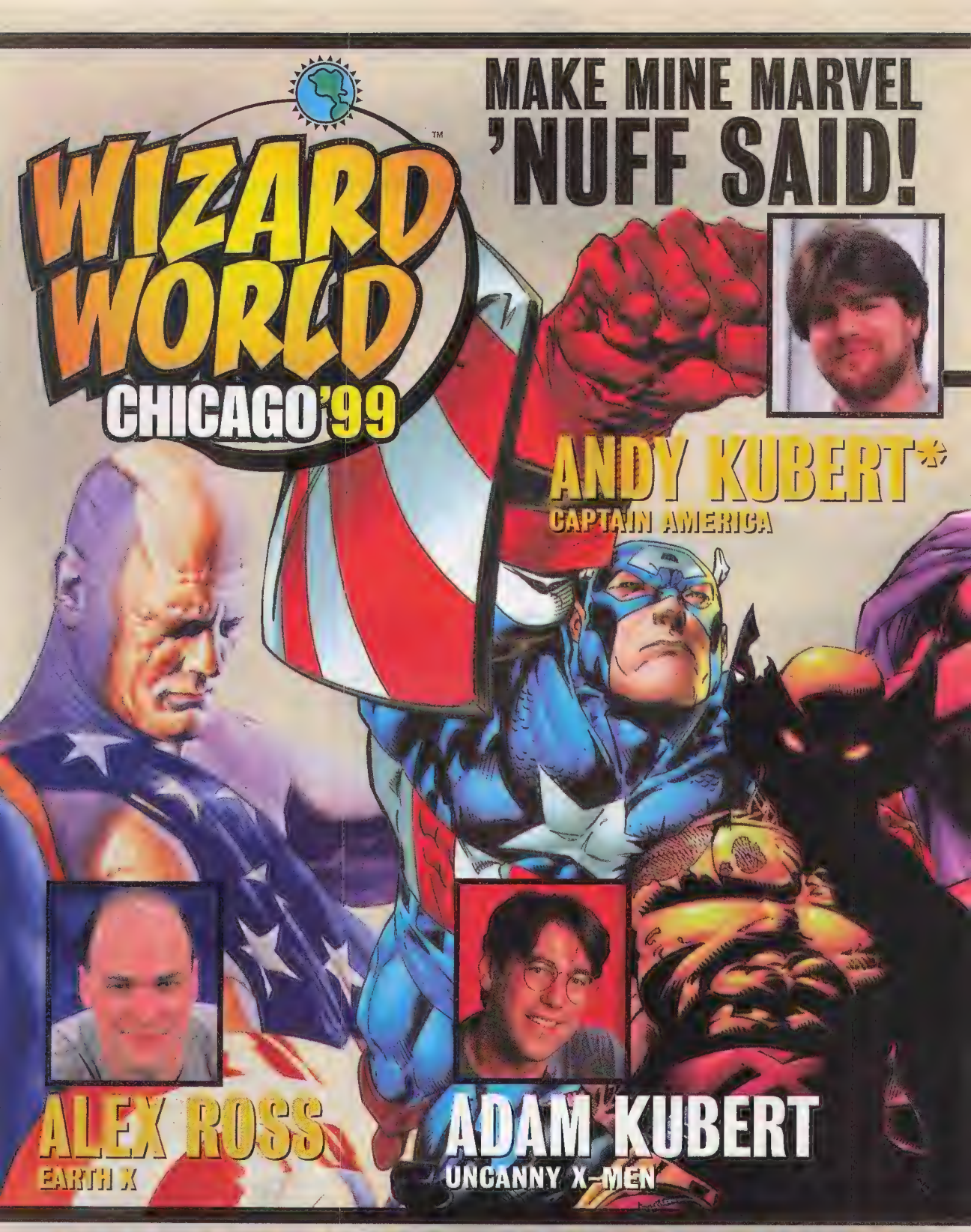

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www.wizardworld.com

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Tickets are sent via first-class mail for all orders received by 6/25/99. All orders received after that date will be held for pickup at the door. All orders received after 7/9/99 will not be processed and returned to sender.

For travel and hotel information, call Tzell Travel at 800-865-9038 ext.666.

For more info, read *Wizard: The Comics Magazine* or visit us online at wizardworld.com

The Power of the Force!

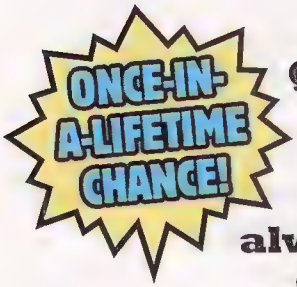
WIZARD #1/2 OFFER

EPISODE I

THE PHANTOM MENACE™

The new saga unfolds! The adventures of young Anakin Skywalker, Obi-Wan Kenobi, Qui-Gon Jinn, and Queen Amidala begin in this exclusive *Wizard* #1/2 in conjunction with Dark Horse Comics. How and why has the life of young Anakin changed? Will young Obi-Wan Kenobi complete his rite of passage? What role does Qui-Gon Jinn play in Anakin's life? And what role does the Young Queen play? The only way to get the answers to these questions is to fill out the coupon, enclose three dollars and mail it in today!

- **A Star Wars movie tie-in!**
- **Anakin, Obi-Wan Kenobi, Qui-Gon Jinn, Queen Amidala!**
- **Extremely limited!**



The Force may be with you always, but this comic sure won't! Order it now before it's gone!

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THIS OFFER EXPIRES JULY 30, 1999

stuff

COMIC BOOK MERCHANDISE YOU CAN BUY...

By David Borak and the *Wizard* Staff

AVAILABLE AT YOUR LOCAL COMICS RETAILER

Who among us doesn't like stuff? Whether it's the Martian Manhunter's BAR-B-Q Grill, Modok's Jumbo Diapers or Luke Skywalker's Artificial Hand with the "Vibrate" setting, we're all suckers for comic-related merchandise. Each month, *Wizard* will strive to show the latest and super-neatest in comic book statues, posters, pins, magnets, shirts and other goodies. In short, if it's cool, and if it's stuff, you'll find it here.

PEE-PEE HEAD The Cantina Member bust can play at birthday parties everywhere.

THIS ISN'T THE BUST YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

Legends in 3 Dimensions presents the Star Wars Cantina Member Resin Bust ($179), perfect for every seedy dive. This fully painted, resin bust of the soulful horn player was sculpted by Greg Aronowitz. It stands 10 inches tall and features a detailed rendering of the hands, head, and horn of this underrated "Star Wars" character. Look for it in stores right now.

STEEL IT Tons o' Super-stuff for 65 bucks!

THE MASTERPIECE OF STEEL

Chronicle Books presents the *Superman Masterpiece Edition* this July. It's a definitive look at the Golden Age Man of Steel. The *Edition* ($65) comes packaged in a 13" X 13" box that includes an illustrated hardcover book by Les Daniels detailing Superman's Golden Age history, as well as an accurately sized reprint of *Superman* #1 from 1939. On top of all that goodness, the *Superman Masterpiece Edition* includes an exclusive 8-inch statue of the 1938 Superman designed by Alex Ross, sculpted by Joe DeVito, and colored by Chris Ware. If your comic store doesn't have it, order directly from Chronicle Books at (800) 722-6657.

UDDERLY COOL SHIRT

In Kevin Smith's world ("Clerks," "Mallrats," "Chasing Amy"), Mooby is one popular mofo. Now the bovine strikes our world! Straight from the pages of *Jay & Silent Bob*, Graphitti Designs brings you the Mooby Cap and T-shirt. Silent Bob's favorite cartoon cow is embroidered on a cool polyester/cotton cap ($19.95) that fits all sizes. You'll also find Mooby in full color on a 100 percent cotton T-shirt ($17.95) in both large and XL sizes. Mooove it on over for Mooby, in stores this May.

CASH COW Can't ransack Kevin Smith's closet? Wear a Mooby shirt straight from his comics.

MARVEL MONOPOLY

USAOPOLY presents another specialty edition of your favorite board game with the new *Monopoly Game: Marvel Comics Edition* ($35). Instead of buying properties, you'll buy and trade rare comic book issues featuring Spider-Man, the Hulk, Captain America and other famous Marvel heroes. Look for it in stores this summer.

BUY IT! Forget eBay! Buy priceless back issues with *Monopoly* money!

A STARRY STATUE

DC Comics presents a highly detailed statue of Jack Knight, better known as Starman. The Starman Medium Statue ($89.95) was sculpted by Tim Bruckner based on designs by *Starman* artist Tony Harris. Measuring 5 1/2" X 8" X 6", the painted Starman Medium Statue includes a 7 1/2" tall pewter staff and a decaled jacket design. It's limited to 2,500 pieces; look for Starman on August 25.

JACK ATTACK When not looking nice on your shelf, this Starman statue can also help unclog pesky toilets.

HOT STUFF!!!!!!!!

PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

STRONG FORCE

Own this and *you'll* be the master. A must for Star Wars fans (well, rich ones) is the Darth Vader Bronze Statue ($3,000) from Bowen Designs. Randy Bowen sculpted this 13 1/2" tall bronze statue of Darth Vader, which comes mounted on a granite base. It's strictly limited to just 100 castings (Fifty of which have already been sold!). Check it out on the Bowen Designs Web page at http://www.bowendesigns.com or contact Bowen at (503) 786-7948. It'll be available in June, so move now!

ULP I'd hate to be the admiral who tells Lord Vader he doesn't rate gold–only bronze.

THE WORLD'S FINEST PRINTS

DC Direct showcases some of superstar Alex Ross' artistic talent with the World's Finest Prints ($19.95 for both). These two four-color prints feature the Dark Knight and the Man of Steel from the covers of *Batman: No Man's Land* and *Superman Forever*, two DC hits published within the last year. Shrink-wrapped with cardboard, each print measures 10" X 13". Look for these prints in stores June 9.

NOT 'BOB ROSS' "Now let's paint in a happy li'l Batman... All our Batmans are happy, yessir..."

A ROCKETING STATUE

Bowen Designs presents the Rocketeer Resin Statue ($150), coming to stores this summer. Kent Melton sculpted this bronze-colored, cold-cast porcelain statue of the Rocketeer, which stands 14 1/2" tall. The Rocketeer is mounted on a highly detailed art deco base and was based on designs by artist Dave Stevens.

IT'S COOKIN' It ain't Jennifer Connelly, but it still looks sweet.

VILLAINS BUST OUT

Bowen Designs presents two new mini-busts of your favorite Marvel villains, Mole Man and the Red Skull. The Mole Man Resin Mini Bust ($30) stands 5 1/4" tall on its base and comes fully painted. The fully painted Red Skull Resin Bust ($30) stands 5" tall and comes mounted on a "cosmic cube" base. Both mini-busts are sculpted by Randy Bowen himself and come with a full-color collector's box. Mole Man and the Red Skull will be available this May.

BUSTIN' LOOSE "Ach, Herr Bowen–mein arms are missink!"

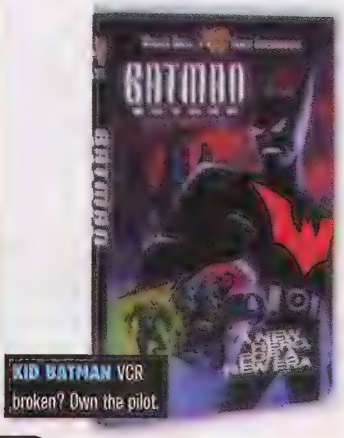
HOLY DOUBLE WATCHES!

DC Comics presents the two watches that bring the dynamic duo together again. The Batman and Robin Watch Set ($69.95) features two watches packaged together in a Batman-decorated aluminum tin. You'll find the classic Batman symbol and the modern Robin symbol in black and yellow on the face of two elegant watches. Look for them July 14.

WATCH OUT Learn when to fight crime and grab free meals offa Alfred with these snazzy watches.

GOING BEYOND VIDEO

Wanna see the future? Warner Bros. Home Entertainment has released the pilot episode of the hip new animated show, "Batman Beyond," which airs on the WB network and was created by the same team behind "Batman: The Animated Series." "Batman Beyond: The Movie Video" ($14.95) features the 45-minute animated pilot that started the new show, set in futuristic Gotham City.. Look for it in VHS format this May.



KID BATMAN VCR broken? Own the pilot.

Check your local stores for availability of all these funky-fresh products. Or ask your friendly neighborhood comic store to special order 'em for ya!

YO! Are you a company who sells stuff cool enough to make the grade here? Let us be the judges of that. Send any info and/or samples to:

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by Christopher Golden, Hector Gomez and Sandy Florea

cover by Jeff Matsuda

Angel

www.darkhorse.com www.buffy.com

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video STUFF

By Matthew Danish

Video killed the radio star, but who's complaining? Certainly not us. Welcome to "Video Stuff," a column where we let loose with news, previews, reviews and super-secret codes for the hottest, most spanktacular console and PC games around. Fire up the controllers...it's video game time.

FEEL THE FORCE!

Celebrate the love with two "Star Wars Episode I" video games. LucasArts will be releasing *Star Wars: Episode I Racer* (a racing game based on the pod-race sequence in "The Phantom Menace") and a 3-D action-adventure game titled *Star Wars: Episode I—The Phantom Menace.*

Racer allows players to choose from more than 20 pilots, step into a chariot-like pod racer and run through a series of tracks. Players can shoot through the deserts of Tatooine, modify their racers, toss objects at opponents and use the pod as a lethal weapon. *Racer* sees release for the PC, Nintendo 64 and PlayStation on May 17; a Macintosh version will follow later this year.

The 3-D *Phantom Menace* (for the PlayStation and PC) hits stores on May 17 too, and offers a chance to explore the Episode I universe as Jedi Qui-Gon Jinn and Obi-Wan Kenobi, as well as Captain Panaka and the benevolent Queen Amidala. As the Jedi, players can use their mind tricks to influence the weak, engage in lightsaber battles and fight against the evil Trade Federation. The game also features plenty of opportunities to speak with strange and bizarre characters (such as Jabba the Hutt) and solve a slew of puzzles.

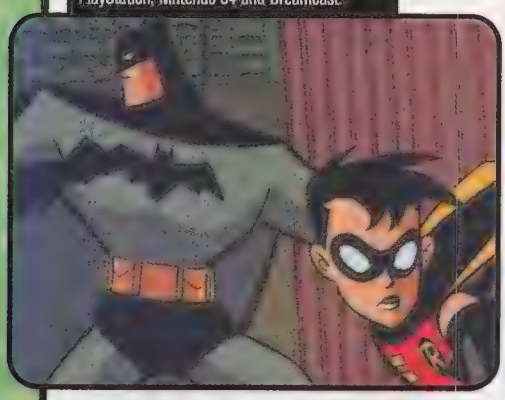
BATCASTED?

Warner Bros. and Ubi Soft recently inked a deal to create a Dreamcast Batman game based on the popular "Batman and Robin" animated TV series. Ubi Soft has already begun development on the Batman game, which will also appear on the Nintendo 64 and PlayStation in 2000.

PLAYSTATION, v.2.0!

Sony executives have released a series of incredible claims and statements regarding the PlayStation2. The PS2, slated for the mass market by March 2000 (in Japan) or the fall of 2000 (in the United States), will contain a 128-bit "emotion engine" consisting of three parallel processors capable of executing five billion floating-point operations a second (compared to Dreamcast's 1.4 billion).

Sony claims that the PS2 will be able to play all of the older PlayStation's games and also will be memory card, controller and accessory compatible with its predecessor.

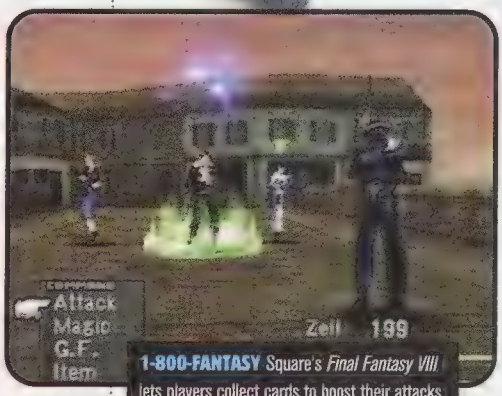


GOTHAM GAMES Ubi Soft brings "Batman and Robin" to the holy trinity of video games–the PlayStation, Nintendo 64 and Dreamcast.

FINAL FANTASY FEVER!

Square Soft's *Final Fantasy VIII* is tearing up the video game scene in Japan. Game enthusiasts are calling *VIII* the most-anticipated sequel of all time, and everyone's counting the days until it is previewed at May's big E3 video game show.

The version features six main characters: Squall Leonhart and his classmates. The game's opening mission involves the capture of a Garbadian president named Derring, a dictator-like figure who has ignited a world war.



1-800-FANTASY Square's *Final Fantasy VIII* lets players collect cards to boost their attacks and acquire weapons.

Fantasy's turn-based battle mode includes a card collecting feature—cards are won from previous battles which can enable players to amass a powerful storehouse of weapons and attacks. The game's vaunted "junction system" allows extremely detailed custom character creation.

Final Fantasy VIII will be released in the United States in late fall. ■

UP AHEAD

'Ehrgeiz' and dolls, sow a monstrous 'Seed,' join the Colonial Marines and more, more, more!!!

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May 1, 1999

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EHRGEIZ

MANUFACTURER: Square Electronic Arts L.L.C.
PLATFORM: Sony PlayStation
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $34.99, available in May

For those who can't wait for Square's *Final Fantasy VIII*, *Ehrgeiz* serves up a concentrated dose of arcade, 3-D, fighting-game-style stomp-ass with some very recognizable characters. *Final Fantasy* mainstays such as Cloud Strife, Tifa Lockhart and Sephiroth appear as selectables in the game, as well as Godhand and others.

Translated from the popular arcade game of the same name, *Ehrgeiz* immerses players in a 3-D world where fighters can maneuver in 360 degrees. Gameplay seems focused on flashy kicks—leg kicks, ax kicks, and jump-spinning back kicks, which, in tandem with basic punches, can be used to set up combos à la *Tekken* or the *Street Fighter* series. Characters also sling such weapons as a bo and a yo-yo and can acquire armor they find along the way. Fighters can clobber their opposition with a variety of deadly items in the game's environment, and, in an extremely neat touch, whenever a character dons a suit of armor, the game shows him wearing it. In addition, the combatants can spin off fearsome special attacks, such as the deadly femme who can morph for a brief time into a dangerous feline. The disc *Wizard* sampled was roughly 75 percent complete, but ultimately enticing.

The game features a good crop of options, including an arcade mode, a versus mode, practice modes, and a quest mode, as well as a slew of mini-games such as a beach race and the board game Othello (no lie). Haven't seen that game in a while.

TRY IT... Dig *Cardinal Syn*, *Tekken 3* or *Tobal*? Then gird your loins (they'll need much girding or you'll be singing soprano forever) for *Ehrgeiz*.

REAL "SQUARES" They don't call *Ehrgeiz* the *Final Fantasy* fighter for nothing. Above: *Fantasy* characters Tifa and Han seek to expose each other's spleens.

MONSTER SEED

MANUFACTURER: SunSoft
PLATFORM: Sony PlayStation
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $34.99, available now

From a tiny seed comes a monster game.

The roleplaying *Monster Seed* pays homage to games such as Sony's *Legend of Legaia* and Tecmo's *Monster Rancher*. The game's strange breeding/fighting hybrid quality gives it a kind of charm, although in the incomplete copy reviewed by *Wizard*, the play seems somewhat slow.

As the game's protagonist, Daniel, players traverse an RPG world and engage in turn-based combat with a rival-world inhabitant. Here, a smart-minded player can increase his potential for survival by calling up a monster for the fight.

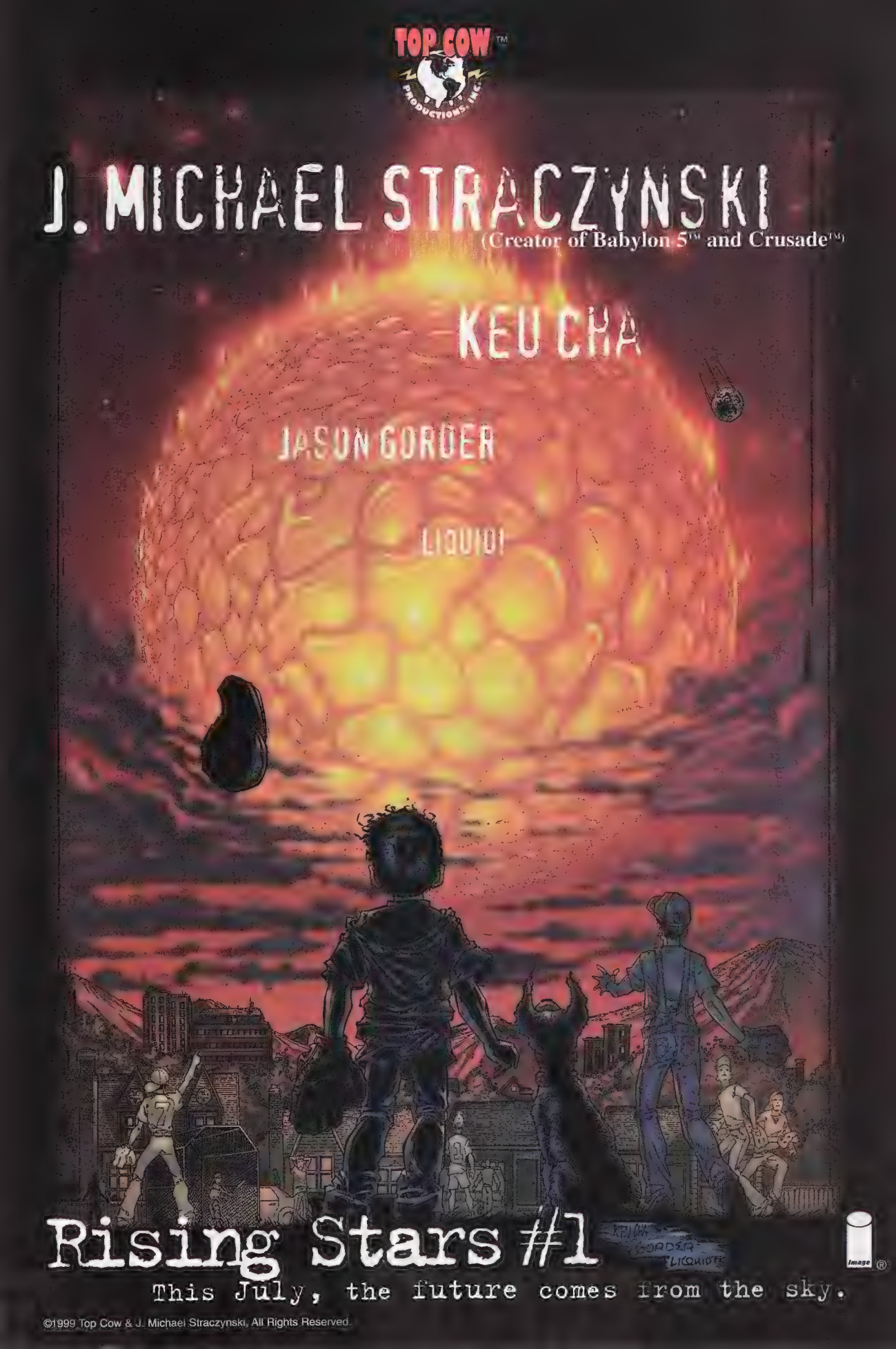
Monsters of all shapes and sizes are created at a special monster-hatching center and brewed by a process of seed selection, cooking and temperature control. They emerge dramatically as in *Monster Rancher* (although no outside CDs need to be inserted to create them here). Monsters exhibit a plethora of somatotypes, temperaments and fighting abilities. Some are fat and a ruddy brown color, so they resemble a miscolored McDonald's Grimace, while others resemble the spunky blue video game character Konoa with wings.

TRY IT... If you like *Monster Rancher*, *Pokémon* or raising chocobos in *Final Fantasy VII*, you'll dig *Monster Seed*.

The game's RPG aspect revolves around a family that aids Daniel, a wise old man that proffers advice and teaches him to buy monsters and a daughter to provide romantic interest. There is even an arena where Daniel's monsters can hone their skills in turn-based practice battles.

SEEDLINGS You don't need a green thumb to grow your own killer beast in *Monster Seed*.

MORE→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ALIENS VS. PREDATOR

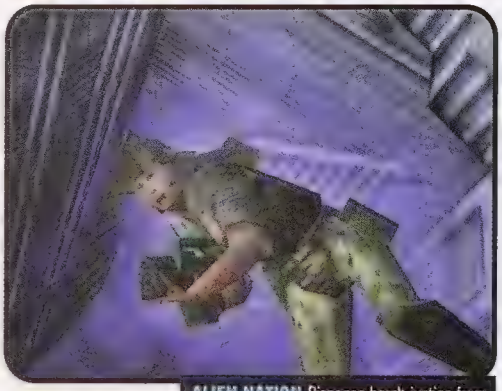
MANUFACTURER: Fox Interactive
PLATFORM: PC
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $39.99, available in May

In cyberspace, no one can hear you scream.

Fox Interactive's upcoming *Aliens vs. Predator*, based on the now-classic "Alien" and "Predator" motion picture properties, is a first-person, maze-shooter game where players choose up a side—either the acid-blooded Aliens, the masked Predators, or the stoic Colonial Marines—and are immersed in the dank, creepy world familiar to fans of James Cameron's "Aliens."

Though *Aliens vs. Predator* adopts a standard first-person interface, it offers superb attention to detail. Get close enough to an Alien, and its oily drool can be seen by the flickering lights; when a Predator is slashed, green blood splatters everywhere. Also included are such tidbits as the Predator's cloaking mode and its three-point laser sighting, and the Alien's ability to scale walls and ceilings. In addition to having specific weapons, such as the Predators' throwing discs or the Colonial Marines' grenade launchers, each species packs its own innate advantages and disadvantages. The Aliens can move with lightning-fast speed, for example, but can't employ distance weapons. Similarly, the Predators can render themselves virtually invisible, but are required to expend energy on this effect and weapons charging. These differences greatly impact the solo missions, in which the goals more often require stealth than head-on attacks, but will take on even greater importance during multi-player Internet games, which will no doubt become all-out frag fests. And if you find yourself swarmed by a battalion of Predators or a hive of Aliens, just remember—if it bleeds, you can kill it. ■ **DAN DiGIACOMO**

TRY IT... If you like "Aliens," "Predator" or maze shoot-'em-ups such as *Quake 2* or *Hexen*, you'll love *Aliens vs. Predator*.



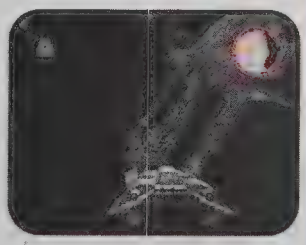
ALIEN NATION Dispense harsh justice from a marine's gun (top) or slice your way to victory with an Alien's claws (bottom) in *Aliens vs. Predator*.

SPECIAL MOVES & SECRET CODES

CHEATSHEET

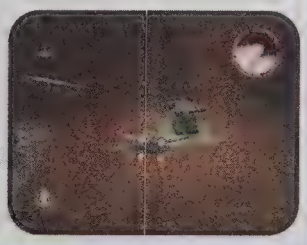
MORE 'ROGUE' CODES...

Flying in circles playing LucasArts' *Star Wars: Rogue Squadron* for the Nintendo 64? Try some of these codes to put a new spin on an old X-Wing fighter.



Play as a TIE Interceptor
- Go to the passcodes screen
- Enter the code "TIEDUP"
- Enter the code "FARMBOY" (This will unlock the *Millennium Falcon* as a playable ship)
- Go to the ship selection screen
- The Interceptor is located behind the *Millennium Falcon*
- Press up on the Nintendo 64's control stick; the game will pan to the Interceptor

Equip a fighter with all power-ups
- Go to the passcodes screen
- Enter the code "TOUGHGUY"



New head for Skywalker?
- Go to the passcodes screen
- Enter the code "HARDROCK"
- Go to the main screen and wait for the demo to play
- Press the "A" button. And be very afraid.

webline

IT CAME FROM THE WORLD WIDE WEB

www.golden.net/%7Etreleavn/toilet2.html
Mistress Cohleana tells you how to read your bowel movements. God help us all.

www.Dreamwaveprod.com
Check out all the cool stuff coming out from Dreamwave Productions, maker of the hit comic *Darkminds*.

www.sunsoft-games.com/
SunSoft has a cool Web site, with lots of game news, a release schedule, game hints and neat graphics.

www.starwars.com/
Get lots of news about all things Star Wars. Download movie trailers and all sorts of cool stuff.

www.warrenellis.com/
Enter the strange, fanciful world of Warren Ellis, writer of *Transmetropolitan* comics and other wonderful works.

www.itsnet.com/~blh/I_Hate_Worf.html
Who doesn't hate Worf from "Star Trek: The Next Generation"?

www.ubisoft.com/
Ubi Soft's site is full of gaming goodness. ■

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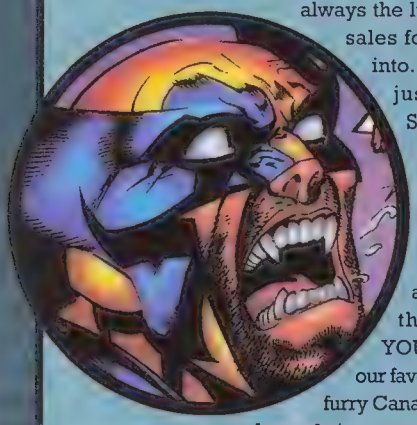
TOP 10 HEROES & VILLAINS

This list doesn't track the number of copies which a specific character sells each month. It doesn't pay attention to any kind of sales meter. This list is a roster of the 10 comic book characters with the strongest fan following—nothing more, nothing less.

1 WOLVERINE

Y'know, if the mutant superhero business ever up-and-goes kablooey (always a possibility, since those X-guys are "hated and feared by a society they're sworn to protect"), there's always the lucrative field of retail sales for Wolverine to look into. Yep, y'see Wolvie is just ADAMANT about SLASHING prices! He's so determined to save you money that little bits of spit come flying outta his mouth every time he tells ya about this *great* deal that he's gonna CUT YOU! Yeah, we figger all our favorite little psycho-freak furry Canadian mutant needs is a decent haircut, some minor charm school lessons, a tasteful clip-on tie and he's ready for the wild world of retail.

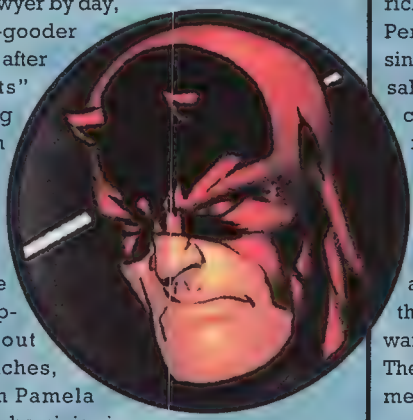


2 SPAWN

And if the market for glowy-green-eyed comic guys ever goes south, Spawn could follow Wolvie into a career in the sales biz. Y'see, ol' Al Simmons is HELL-BENT about banishing high prices right INTO THE ALLEY! He'll BLAST 50 percent off manufacturer's suggested retail! He'll..., ah, it'll never happen. See, Spawny-guy is being spun into the new *Spawn: The Dark Ages* and *Spawn the Undead* ongoing series, so things are goin' better-than-okay for him right now. And remember—Spawn's boss, Todd McFarlane, just shelled out $3 million for eight ounces worth of official National League horsehide swatted by Mark McGwire. There's no need for Spawn to go lookin' for a job.

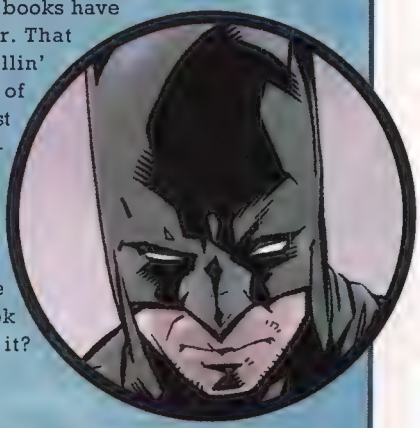
3 DAREDEVIL

Job prospects? They're lookin' up for Daredevil! Sure, he's always been Matt Murdock, attorney at law. But a year or so ago, that was it—lawyer by day, long-underwear do-gooder by night. Now today, after a "Marvel Knights" rebirth and the writing stylings of one Kevin Smith, Esq., the Man Without Fear is gettin' more offers than he can field. They want him to cut the ribbons at new shopping malls, throw out ceremonial first pitches, and guest-star with Pamela Anderson to fight scuba ninjas in an episode of "V.I.P." Even a blind man could see *that's* a good gig!



4 BATMAN

Batman, meanwhile, has no need for employment prospects of any kind. In his Bruce Wayne alter ego, he's already richer than Donald Trump, Dennis Rodman and H. Ross Perot combined. And ya know what the kicker is? Ever since the "No Man's Land" story arc started in January, sales on the Batman books have crept even higher. That means Bats is pullin' down even *more* of the long green! Just goes ta show ya—the rich get richer, and the poor get the shaft. Makes ya wanna rise up, crush The Man and seize the means of comic book production, don't it? Power to the People!



5 MAGNETO

Magneto, much like famed pro boxer and all-around thug Mike Tyson, proves that being bad can actually be a profitable undertaking. Tyson bites ears, smashes into cars and forces himself on women. What's it get him? Fight contracts with $10 million purses. Magneto bullies humanity, sucks the adamantium out of Wolverine, leaves bags of flaming dog poop on the X-mansion doorstep and blows stuff up real good. What's it get him? His own country—Genosha. Hey, this "bad" stuff is lookin' pretty good!

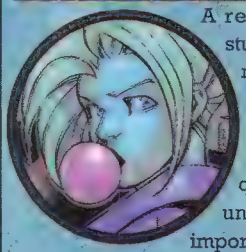
6 WITCHBLADE

And if the bad guys get too bad, there's always Sara Pezzini, curvy policewoman and designated Witchblade-wearer, to bust 'em and bring 'em in. Which suddenly reminds us, have we been passed-out drunk again, or has it been five issues or more since we've even *seen* the Witchblade? Sara's been so busy playin' "N.Y.P.D. Blue" that her lovely little mystical gauntlet/can opener has fallen by the wayside. Better bust it out again—there's lotsa bad guys waitin' to be busted.

7 THOR

Speaking of bust, can you imagine what it would be like get busted upside yo' head by sacred Mjolnir, Thor's trusty hammer? We're talkin' Excedrin headache No. 9, 10 *and* 11, all rolled into one! And, as soon as Thor finishes his current tussle with the Dark Gods—the bastards who took over Asgard—he's gonna find out the identity of Marnot, the enigmatic rat who's been muckin' with his personal life. Word of advice to Marnot: Load up on aspirin. Now.

8 BUFFY



A recent poll of male high-school students, 30-minute oil-change technicians and overweight guys who still live with their mothers found that cute blonde chicks who slay the undead are a turn-on. A subsequent poll revealed that the "slay the undead" part really wasn't all that important. But hey! Buffy's got that going for her too! Guess that's why she's number eight on this list and Carla, the cute blonde chick who works the register at Quick Lube—but doesn't kill vampires—is nowhere.

9 PIKACHU

Awww. Now isn't that cute? Isn't Pikachu just the cutest widdle electric mouse creature-thing you've ever seen? The answer, unless you happen to come from the Planet of the Electric Mouse Creature-Things, is "yes." And Pikachu is more than just cute—it's hot! Gotta catch 'em all, y'know! Everyone wants a piece of Pikachu these days. Everyone! The piece we want? How 'bout a drumstick? Wonder what Pikachu would taste like smothered in barbecue sauce and roasted on a spit?

10 DEADPOOL

Oooh, don't you just hate it when someone pulls that ol' Three Stooges "box your ears" routine? Hurts like a sonuvabitch. And if there's one character who doesn't deserve this shabby treatment, it's Deadpool. Why? 'Cause Marvel's merc-with-a-mouth is the star of one of the coolest, side-splittingest, drop-dead-funniest funnybooks found today. And there's still lots of killing and hurting and maiming and stuff going on alongside the jokes in *Deadpool*. What more could you possibly want?

MORT OF THE MONTH

ONE LAME-ASS CHARACTER

MANSLAUGHTER

Nice boots.

Meet Manslaughter, a 5-foot-7, 115-pound pixie-ish pantywaist of an assassin. And speaking of panties, it looks like Manslaughter's idea of a mask is to wear thong bikini briefs until they get a hole in 'em, put 'em on his head, turn sideways and *voila*!—instant mask!

As if complete and total lack of fashion sense weren't enough, this lameoid Marvel killer (and former Defenders villain) has the weakest of powers—he can "influence the peripheral vision of other people" so that he effectively becomes invisible...unless someone is looking directly at him.

Like anyone would want to anyway.

MORTOMETER

MORE SPECIAL GUESTS TO BE ANNOUNCED NEXT MONTH!

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*With the purchase of an adult ticket.

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WIZARD ENTERTAINMENT PRESENTS:

CONTEST

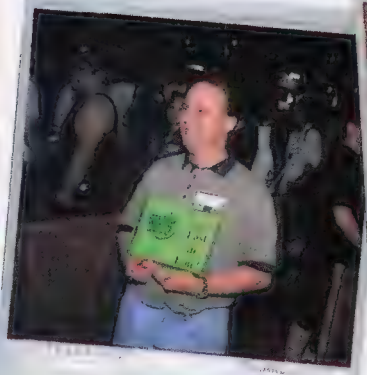
WELCOME TO WIZARD WORLD: CHICAGO '99!

PRIZE

GRAND PRIZE (1): One lucky fanboy or girl will win round-trip airfare to the coolest comic convention on Earth—Wizard World: Chicago! He'll stay three days and two nights at a fabulous hotel and receive $200 worth of WizBux, which is money that can be used inside the convention. But that's not the best part, the winner will also have the opportunity to hobnob with all his favorite artists, writers and models. Psyched?

All you need to do to win this contest is fill out the entry form below and mail it in! We'll pick one lucky winner (18 years or older) at random and send him on his way. Don't forget to pack clean underwear and bring lots of Dramamine for the flight.

THRILLS!



CHILLS!

GAREB!

THIS CONTEST IS SPONSORED BY WIZARD ENTERTAINMENT. NEED WE SAY ANY MORE?

CHEESY LEGAL STUFF

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Entertainment, their immediate families and people who hate cheese. We don't want to upset the Big Guy. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip, e-mail address and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: "Welcome To Wizard World: Chicago '99!" Contest, c/o Wizard Entertainment, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries and all rights relating thereto become property of Wizard Entertainment and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. Entrants must be 18 years or older to win. **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by June 15, 1999.** Wizard Entertainment is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Winners will be selected based by a random drawing by Wizard Entertainment. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Winners will be notified no later than July 3, 1999. If an entrant, having been declared as a winner, does not accept the prize or the prize or prize notification is undeliverable, another entry will be selected. Wouldn't that suck? You win a trip to the best damn convention on the planet and the notification is undeliverable? In the event that a prize is not available or it becomes impossible for the sponsor to award the prize which has been designated, the sponsor retains the right to substitute a prize or product of equal value to the winner. Determination of whether a prize or product is of equal value is in the sole discretion of the sponsor. Winning entries will be selected on or about June 26, 1999.

For a list of winners, available after June 26, 1999, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: "Welcome To Wizard World: Chicago '99!" Winners List, c/o Wizard Entertainment, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

ALL PHOTOS BY PAUL SCHRADER

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Fill this out and put it in an envelope. Send it to:

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"Welcome To Wizard World: Chicago '99!" Contest Entry Form

CONTEST DEADLINE JUNE 15, 1999!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

E-Mail Address _____

picks

THE MUST-READ COMICS SHIPPING IN MAY

PICK OF THE LITTER

book of the month

SAVAGE DRAGON #61

IMAGE COMICS The optimist would say it's a good thing that Savage Dragon's ex-girlfriend Rapture has returned. The pessimist would beat the optimist with a blunt object repeatedly and then point out that Rapture is back FROM THE DEAD—and supremely pissed. Is Rapture a clone? A robot? An evil twin? A muppet? Two ducks in a Rapture suit? A "Picks" writer in drag? Sigh. Only Erik Larsen knows for sure. $2.50

THE AUTHORITY #3

WILDSTORM/DC Note to all: Kiss your cheeseburger-fattened asses good-bye. Superhero team the Authority recently saved London from 100 superhuman terrorists, but sadly won't be able to fully protect an American city from destruction. Respect this *authoritah* from Brits Warren Ellis, Bryan Hitch and Paul Neary. **$2.50**

AVENGERS #18

MARVEL Polemachus sounds like something your cat'd cough up, and not some wacked-out, far-off world. But apparently that's just what it is, and the villainous Wrecking Crew are gonna suck the planet—and former Avenger Photon—dry as the Sahara desert. And where are the Avengers? Oh, they're just hunting down the scantily clad, bohunk power merchant, Arkon. By Jerry Ordway and Al Gordon. And to warm up for the millennium, check out *Avengers 1999,* which explains why heroine Black Widow never re-formed the Avengers after the team disappeared fighting Onslaught. By Kurt Busiek, John Francis Moore and Leonardo Manco. **$1.99—#18; $3.50—*1999***

AVENGERS FOREVER #8 (OF 12)

MARVEL Got a quarter? Dial "I" for Immortus, the time-traveling hosebag who's trapped the Avengers in Limbo. This secretive sleaze has been lurking throughout Marvel history, but now his fiendish plan and his pre-first appearance activities will be revealed—as will many a secret about such Avengers as the Scarlet Witch and the Vision. By Kurt Busiek, Carlos Pacheco and Jesus Merino. **$2.99**

BATMAN BOOKS

DC COMICS The chief exports of earthquake-ravaged Gotham City are stiffs and rubble. The Gotham turf war escalates with Batman attacking Two-Face and the cops muscling in on the Penguin's territory in *Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight* #119, while over in *Batman: Shadow of the Bat* #87, Two-Face does the Tennessee waltz all over Batman. An assassin comes to Gotham with murder on his mind in *Batman* #567, and only one of Oracle's agents can stop him. Get the scoop on this mysterious young woman in *Detective Comics* #567. By Greg Rucka, Mike Deodato Jr. and Wayne Faucher (*B:LotDK* and *B:SotB*), and Kelley Puckett, Damon Scott and John Floyd (*Batman* and *Detective*). **$1.99 each**

MR TITLES DENOTED WITH AN MR CONTAIN MATERIAL THAT'S SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS.

BLACK WIDOW #2 (OF 3)

MARVEL Cat fight! Spandex-clad super-babes Black Widow and...er...Black Widow duke it out over killer biological weapons. Someone's going home with hurt feelings, and when the smoke clears, the old Widow might be heading for the retirement home. By Devin Grayson and J.G. Jones. Grayson says, "It leaves Natasha [the original Widow] questioning—watching this new woman so desperately wanting to be Black Widow. It brings up a lot of issues for Natasha about why she ever wanted to do it, and if in fact she chose it." **$2.99**

DAREDEVIL #9

MARVEL It's Mack tonight! *Kabuki*'s David Mack takes over *Daredevil* and brings Weight Watcher's greatest nemesis, the Kingpin, to the forefront. Y'see, one of the Kingpin's goons confronts Daredevil with the fat bastard's secrets, which prompts the criminal mastermind to send out his newest hitman. And that's trouble in any language. By Mack, Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti. "Where [the Kingpin] is right now," Mack says, "there's some pretty nasty stuff. He's messing with people's lives in a very devious, dark way. After seeing him in the first two [Mack-written] issues or so, you'd have to say the Kingpin is an '11' on the one-to-10 evil scale. Everybody sorts of reaps what they sow by the end of the series—and something very interesting happens to the Kingpin." **$2.50**

GREEN LANTERN #114

DC COMICS "Burning in Effigy," part 2 (of 2). Los Angeles is a disco inferno, but there ain't any music playing. While the city does its Human Torch impersonation, Green Lantern Kyle Rayner must decide whether he wants to stop the party-minded Effigy or play firefighter. By Ron Marz, Georges Jeanty and Terry Austin. **$1.99**

newreleases

FIRST TIME OUT

A. BIZARRO #1 **(DC Comics)** Normalcy goes to France when Al Bizarro is cloned from a fired LexCorp employee. Hoo boy. $2.50

BATMAN: NO MAN'S LAND GALLERY **(DC Comics)** Jim Lee and other artists draw purty pictures of Batman and the earthquake-flattened Gotham City. $3.95

BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER: ANGEL #1 **(Dark Horse)** Irony 101: The man named "Angel" is a *vampire*. Kooky, ain't it? Anyway, Angel tracks an ancient evil right to Sunnydale, U.S.A. $2.95

COVEN RE:GEX #1 **(Awesome)** Coven witches Blackmass and Spellcaster discover they have ties with the members of the superteam Re:Gex. $2.50

HELLHOLE #1 **(Top Cow/Image)** In the hellhole men call Hellhole, cop Michael Cabrini and his partner stand fast against a supernatural terror that could destroy the world. $2.50

INCREDIBLE HULK VS. SUPERMAN **(Marvel)** Well, this is pretty much the main event, ain't it? Villain Lex Luthor referees. $5.99

INSANE CLOWN POSSE #1 **(Chaos!)** A mad circus with an insane clown posse of real-world rappers Shaggy 2 Dope and Violent J takes a tour of lunacy. $2.95

LADY DEATH: THE RAPTURE #1 **(Chaos!)** Lady Death gets a new sword, visits the man who condemned her to perdition and ignites a war between Heaven and Hell. Yep, just yer average day. $2.95

LADY PENDRAGON/MORE THAN MORTAL #1 **(Image)** Lovely Irish heroine Protector swings swords with England's Lady Pendragon. $2.50

SPAWN ANNUAL #1 **(Todd McFarlane/Image)** Something's pulling Spawn to Spawn alley, and there's a reason why a tenement in the alley attracts wayward souls. $4.95

SPIDER-WOMAN #1 **(Marvel)** A Spider-villainess is hard at work whacking arachnid-themed superwomen. Guess that spells trouble for the teenage girl who's become the new Spider-Woman. $2.99

STARS AND S.T.R.I.P.E. #0 **(DC Comics)** Get patriotic as a new, teenaged Star-Spangled Kid emerges and teams with her old man to battle the chilly Icicle, the villain who killed the original Kid. $2.95

SUPERMAN: THE ODYSSEY **(DC Comics)** Before he became Superman, Clark Kent went on a voyage of discovery, fell in love with an heiress–and learned he couldn't protect her country forever. $4.95

SUPREME: THE RETURN #1 **(Awesome)** Superhuman goons try to kill the president of the United States and run into the brick wall named Supreme. $2.99

TEAM SUPERMAN #1 **(DC Comics)** Superboy, Supergirl and Steel rescue Superman from a shape-shifting killer and then help their near-indestructible pal thrash some aliens. $2.95

TELLOS #1 **(Image)** The world of Tellos is threatened by bad, bad mojo, and only a raggedy band of heroes can set things right. $2.50

TREKKER #1 **(Image)** Call them *Trekkies*. And call Marcy St. Clair a newbie bounty hunter, who's out to nab New Gelaph's most prolific arsonist. $2.50

YOUNG JUSTICE IN NO MAN'S LAND #1 **(DC Comics)** Teenaged heroes in Young Justice foolishly visit ruined Gotham City and fall prey to the crime group Kobra and the pulpy villain Ferak. $3.95

HITMAN #39

DC COMICS This Ringo won't be singing "Yellow Submarine" anytime soon. He's a heartless killer who'd stick a shiv in your ribs while he was stealing money from an orphanage and slapping nuns. Anyway, Ringo Chen and his fellow hitman Tommy Monaghan have a lot in common—such as dating the lovely Wendy. That and killing people. Learn all of Ringo's sordid secrets as told by Garth Ennis, John McCrea and Garry Leach. **$2.50**

THE HUMAN TARGET #4 (OF 4)

VERTIGO/DC Someone's shooting for Human Target Christopher Chance. Chance is impersonating the Reverend Earl James and preparing to give the preacher's final sermon, but the killer Emerald is eager to conclude services early, if you smell what this "Picks" writer is cooking. By Peter Milligan and Edvin Biukovic. **MR. $2.95**

INHUMANS #9 (OF 12)

MARVEL Avast, ye landlubbers! The Inhumans be warrin' with the scurvy-dog humans, and the sea-loving Inhuman Triton travels through the briny blue to enlist the aid of Namor the Sub-Mariner. All would be smooth seas, but a watery grave is unearthed and it's awfully familiar to our boy Triton...By Paul Jenkins and Jae Lee. **$2.99**

THE INVISIBLES (VOL. 3) #9

VERTIGO/DC "Satanstorm," part 4 (of 4). Geriatric windbag Dick Clark won't be counting down to this deadline—the end of the world! Before everybody cashes in their chips, Invisibles leader King Mob and a new team member battle to save Inspector Flint's hide. More merriment ensues as Lord Fanny finds a new ally and the chilly Jack Frost digs up some dirt on the alien satellite Barbelith. By Grant Morrison, Phillip Bond and Warren Pleece. **MR. $2.95**

JLA #31

IRON MAN #18

MARVEL Sunset Bain is certainly a pain, but she's got Tony Stark working for her—finally. And while Stark sells his soul to this curvaceous creep, he'll be forced into battle—and joined by his old, armored partner War Machine, who's got a brand-spanking-new secret origin that's just waiting to become not-so-secret. By Kurt Busiek, Roger Stern, Sean Chen and Larry Stucker. **$1.99**

JLA #31

DC COMICS "Crisis Times Five," part 4 (of 4). Bow your heads, 'cause a veteran hero from the JLA or JSA is doomed to die at the hands of fifth-dimensional fiend "LKZ." (Hey—we'll pony up $50 if it's Snapper Carr!) Meanwhile, newbie hero J.J. Thunder leaps into the fray, and our heroes'll have to defeat their LKZ-enslaved comrades and rescue the Spectre from the cosmic jail he's doing hard time in. Now *that's* a busy issue. By Grant Morrison, Howard Porter and John Dell. **$1.99**

THE LEAGUE OF EXTRAORDINARY GENTLEMEN #4 (OF 6)

WILDSTORM/DC Slink through the sewers of 19th century London with certifiable nutjobs Hawley Griffin (the Invisible Man) and Mr. Ed Hyde, as they lead Mina Murray and adventurer Allan Quatermain on an expedition to find the magic metal Cavorite. Plus, you'll finally meet the fiendish and mysterious Man(chu) who's been in the background. By Alan Moore and Kevin O'Neill. **$2.95**

MADMAN COMICS #13

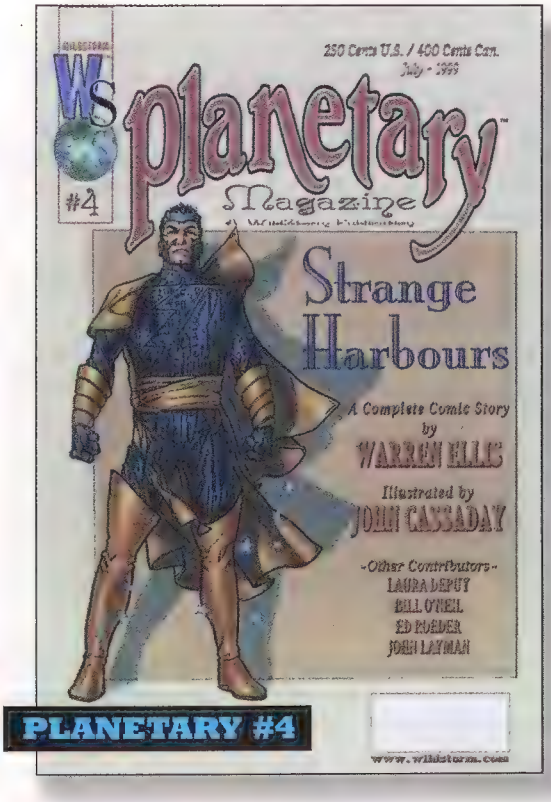
DARK HORSE The Snap City super-dude Madman hunts for his pal Dr. Boiffard, but is shanghaied by the jerkalicious Silencer. And the hits keep on coming when the mysterious hero Moth shows up and Dr. Boiffard is mutated into something you might find in a late night sci-fi flick. By Mike Allred, who says, "Dr. Boiffard is a scientist who's highly regarded in the scientific community, and, of course, having his abilities would be a major asset to any organization. The Silencer has been sent to retrieve him after hearing he's experimented with a brain expansion formula which not only increases intelligence, but has literally expanded his brain to where it's like a hot-air balloon." **$2.95**

NIGHTWING #33

DC COMICS Boy, do we ever hate the French. From Batroc the Leaper to Charles De Gaulle to new villainess team Double Dare, the whole lot of 'em should be locked in the Louvre and shot to Saturn. Y'see, Nightwing's studying up to be a cop, but he's gotta drop his nightstick and pepper spray to save Double Dare from the shocking Electrocutioner. By Chuck Dixon, Scott McDaniel and Karl Story. **$1.99**

ONI DOUBLE FEATURE #12

ONI PRESS When New Jersey needs defending, it's time to roll a fatty and get down to stomping with Kevin Smith's drug-addled heroes Bluntman and Chronic. As one of them added-bonus things, *Feature* also features backup features (Hah!) guaranteed not to give you the munchies. By Smith, Mike Allred, Paul Dini, Tom Fowler and Sergio Aragonés. **MR. $2.95**



PLANETARY #4

PLANETARY #4

WILDSTORM/DC Looking for private dick John Wilder? Well, better start your search in the supermarket, on the backs of milk cartons. The gumshoe's gone missing after walking on a mystic artifact, and now he's stuck in one of those wacky multiverses, destined never to return until six people step on the gizmo or until the next *Battle Chasers* comes out. Tough break. By Warren Ellis and John Cassaday. **$2.50**

PREACHER #51

VERTIGO/DC Bible-belle Tulip's been trekking across America with her boyfriend, preacher Jesse Custer, and an alcoholic Irish vampire for just about forever. Her mysterious past is now revealed, and the team of Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon promise to disclose just how Tulip became so handy with them thar guns. **MR. $2.50**

ROBIN #66

DC COMICS The only hospitals we wanna see are in the epic film "Naughty Nurses," and Robin probably feels the same way, too. When villain Nick Scratch's demons start tearing up a medical center looking for a cure to their genetic condition, Robin leaps in, feet and fists flying. Whup ass, boy! Better send for the paramedics, though, 'cause the demons are dying fast! By Chuck Dixon, Staz Johnson and Stan Woch. **$1.99**

SLINGERS #8

MARVEL Inhale the heady aroma of death and despair (which smells a lot like the *Wizard* men's room) as the greasy, grimy, grotesque sewer dweller Griz attempts to mutate the hero Hornet. Hornet's Slinger pals Ricochet and Dusk go on a rescue mission, but Griz's fumes might be too much for even them to bear. By Joseph Harris, Chrisscross and Rob Stull. **$1.99**

alsoshipping

MORE BOOKS TO GET

CAPTAIN AMERICA BOOKS (Marvel) Captain America on a crime spree? Believe it, man, because it happens in *Captain America: Sentinel of Liberty* #11. Two invincible foes (one of whom's the Red Skull) try fryin' Cap's bacon in *Captain America* #19. **$1.99 each**

THE DARKNESS #24 (Top Cow/Image) Viva Las Vegas! Darkness wielder Jackie Estacado heads to Sin City for gambling, girls, gin guzzling, guns and a great little place called Hotel Hell. **$2.50**

EARTH X #4 (Marvel) X marks the spot for a world laden with superheroes. A new Hulk and Sorceress Supreme make their debut, and Captain America is lured into the Skull's evil hands. **$2.99**

FANTASTIC FOUR #19 (Marvel) Ain't nothing positive about the Negative Zone. The Fantastic Four are trapped there, and the only way out's through the villain Annihilus' palace. **$1.99**

FLASH #150 (DC Comics) Today on "Jerry Springer": When evil twins go bad and try to destroy the universe. Starring stuper villain Cobalt Blue, his good twin Flash Barry Allen and a host of other Flashes. Plus, lesbians who marry their sisters! **$2.95**

MAGNETO REX #3 (Marvel) Magneto tries consolidating his hold on the nation of Genosha, but Quicksilver and Rogue aim to impeach the rat bastard. **$2.50**

SPAWN #86 (Todd McFarlane/Image) In the worst case of self-loathing on record, Spawn fights himself (Al Simmons). **$1.95**

SPIDER-MAN BOOKS (Marvel) Spidey takes on Daredevil at the evilest show on Earth, courtesy of the Ringmaster's Circus of Crime in *Spider-Man: Chapter One* #9. Reality ain't so real in the seventh issues of *Amazing Spider-Man* and *Peter Parker: Spider-Man*, because former corpses Uncle Ben and Gwen Stacy are still living and Flash Thompson becomes Spidey's partner. **$2.50–*Chapter One*; $1.99–each.**

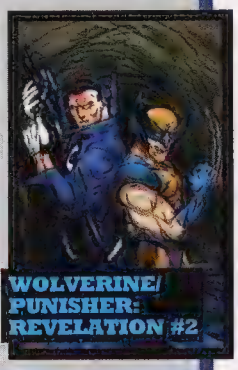
STAR WARS BOOKS (Dark Horse) Jedi Ki-Adi Mundi uncovers a fiendish plot by gangster Jabba the Hutt to start a war in *Star Wars* #6, and Darth Vader confronts his son Luke Skywalker for the first time in *Star Wars: Vader's Quest* #4. Darths Sidious and Maul tap dance over a host of good Jedi Knights in *Episode I—The Phantom Menace* #1–#4, and the lives of Jedi-to-be Anakin Skywalker and Obi-Wan Kenobi are uncovered in *The Phantom Menace Anakin Skywalker* and *The Phantom Menace Obi-Wan Kenobi*, respectively. **$2.50–*Star Wars*; $2.95–each**

SUPERMAN BOOKS (DC Comics) The Man of Steel visits Necropolis, the deadest city around, in *Action Comics* #755, and in *Superman: The Man of Steel* #90, our invincible hero battles a robot he assigned to protect his wife, Lois Lane. Can the terrible Toyman be reformed? Check out *Superman* #146 for the answer. And the Metropolis S.C.U. Police Force goes on a superhuman recruitment drive in *Adventures of Superman* #569. **$1.99 each**

WITCHBLADE #32 (Top Cow/Image) Gauntlet girl Sara Pezzini searches for the origin and true purpose of the Witchblade amulet. **$2.50**

WOLVERINE #140 (Marvel) The X-Men return from space to find 50 pounds of junk mail in their mailbox and a world that's a lot more strange than the one they're used to. **$1.99**

WOLVERINE/PUNISHER: REVELATION #2 (Marvel) Wolverine and Punisher try curing a plague while mean-minded mutant Revelation continues the idiotic trend of villains living in sewers. **$2.99**

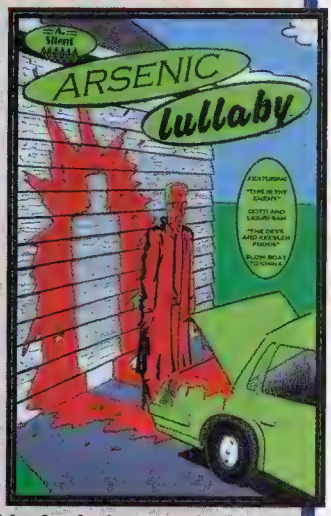


WOLVERINE/ PUNISHER: REVELATION #2

on the edge

ARSENIC LULLABY MAY '99

A SILENT COMICS Great comics inspire the mind, but *Arsenic Lullaby* might inspire you to set your pants on fire and do a strange, snake-like dance. Midgets get beaten with tire irons, witch zombies wreak havoc with zombie fetuses and small innocent babes are abused by a census agent. By Douglas Paskiewicz, who says, "It's written with the philosophy that something can be so horrible that it's funny. Basically, I'm from the old school where you make fun of people who are different. We're losing sight of that in this country and need to get back to it—making fun of people who are different than you are." **$2.50**



THOR #13

MARVEL Ye olde realm of Asgard is free and the Dark Gods' sinister lights have been turned off. Normally it'd be time for an ice-cold flagon of mead and a trip to Disneyland, but Thor's got more pressing matters. He's gotta unmask the puppet-master Marnot, tackle the evil Asgardian trio of the Executioner, Loki and Enchantress, *and* come to grips with sharing bodies with human Jake Olson. It's tough bein' a god. By Dan Jurgens, John Romita Jr. and Klaus Janson. **$1.99**

THUNDERBOLTS #28

MARVEL Gravity sucks, don't it? The twisted master of polar pull Graviton makes things heavy for the reformed villains in the Thunderbolts, but our heroes have a secret weapon on their side. He's the blue-skinned X-Man Archangel, and he can...um...fly. By Kurt Busiek, Mark Bagley and Scott Hanna. "The last time we saw Graviton," Busiek says, "Moonstone had convinced him that he didn't know what he wants—that he had all this power, but no vision. Now, well, he's found one. He's back, he's got a plan, and everybody's looking at Moonstone and going, 'Oh, thank you very much!' And Moonstone's reaping the benefit of short-term thinking." **$1.99**

TITANS #5

DC COMICS Argh, maties! This be a great month for sea-themed stories, and the Titans are tempted by the sweet, melodious song of a mermaid. This mermaid be no cutesy redhead named Ariel, though, and not even the salty sailor Tempest may be able to resist her siren sounds. By scurvy dogs Devin Grayson, Mark Buckingham and Wade Von Grawbadger. **$2.50**

TOM STRONG #2

WILDSTORM/DC Millennium City, besieged by the multi-purpose (and ever-so-functional) Modular Man, calls upon its greatest hero, Tom Strong. Strong, however, is on Venus, so Millennium City will have to settle for a pair of Strong's siblings, a super-intelligent ape and a robot butler. Cool. By Alan Moore, Chris Sprouse and Al Gordon. **$2.95**

TRANSMETROPOLITAN #23

VERTIGO/DC Whoever said "Let a smile be your umbrella" was an idiot. And he certainly never met "the Smiler," the creepy cat who's running for president. When crazy journalist Spider Jerusalem interviews the Smiler, he learns exactly what's going on behind his subject's killer smile. "For the first time we get a good look at the Smiler," writer Warren Ellis says, "and find out what's going on behind those glazed eyes of his—and frankly, he's barking mad." Smiler, Ellis adds, is an amalgam of incompetent politicians, with the character's ever-present smirk inspired by England's Prime Minister Tony Blair. "Sadly, Tony Blair, our prime minister, got to that position largely by having no visible policies at all aside from an implied promise that he will tell any lie required to become prime minister." By Ellis, Darick Robertson and Rodney Ramos. **MR. $2.50**

UNCANNY X-MEN #370

MARVEL Trapped in the past. Stuck on a parallel Earth. Forced to interact with familiar heroes and villains. Yep, it's got "X-Men" written all over it. But when a historic cosmic disaster seems to repeat itself, are the X-Men willing to sit by and let things happen? C'mon—what do *you* think? (Check out *X-Men* #90 to see what happens.) By Alan Davis, Adam Kubert and Tim Townsend. **$1.99**

THOR #13

WILDCATS #3

WILDSTORM/DC Normally, the thought of an all-girls school would have us drowning in our own drool, but this particular school's got a headmaster straight from everyone's worst nightmare. Gunslinger Grifter goes undercover as an ice-cream man to investigate this demonic fiend, but his hands are too full with angry kids and bomb pops to hold any weapons. By Scott Lobdell, Travis Charest and Richard Friend. **$2.50**

X-MEN #90

MARVEL It's lunch time for the planet-eating Galactus. While the big G sets out a napkin the size of Jupiter, the time-lost X-Men must save a planet or turn in their official superhero membership badges. And what the X-Men do in the past may have grave consequences for the future—specifically for the would-be world beater, Magneto. By Alan Davis and Mark Farmer. **$1.99**

characterprofile

RAP SHEET

ROBIN

CAPED CRUSADER: Robin's detachable cape is specially weighted to slow his descents from rooftops. Flame and bullet resistant, it once protected him and a homeless man from an exploding tank of propane. (*Robin* #61)

EYE SEE: Robin's mask contains light-intensification lenses letting him see in near-darkness. How's it stay on his face? Spirit gum. (*Robin* #10)

JUST SAY NO: Robin was once given a drug that granted him super-speed. Under its influence, he nearly killed the evil Lady Shiva, then resuscitated her. (*Robin* #51)

ARMED: In his arm and glove pouches, Tim carries a miniature cell phone, a rebreather, a radio scanner, antidote syringes, a sonar ranger and more. (*Robin* #46)

SHARP AS A TACK: Robin's pointy "R" symbol can be detached and thrown as a weapon, like when he stabbed a crazed Jean-Paul Valley in the arm with it. (*Robin* #1)

LOVE STINKS: Robin decided to dump his "regular" girlfriend Ariana for the costumed vigilante the Spoiler, who knows him only as Robin. Thing is, Ari dumped him first. Ouch! (*Robin* #56)

THUMBELINA: Robin once dislocated his thumb to get out of the bonds the Baffler tied him up in. (*Robin* #44)

A SHOCKER: Robin's costume contains a one-time-only taser charge to knock opponents on their asses. Of course, Timmy himself remains unharmed.

SWISS-ARMY BELT: The Boy Wonder carries tons o' weapons in his utility belt, including gas, glue and friction-free capsules (they turn any surface slicker than ice), a fire extinguisher, smoke pellets, and more.

HAIR TODAY: As opposed to Dick Grayson's bare-legged Robin costume, which showed off his smooth legs, Tim's costume covers his legs, which are actually hairy. Guess Batman doesn't trust him with the Bat-razor yet. (*Robin* #61)

FOOT SOLDIER: Robin's split-toe boots, taken from the ninjas, aid in climbing.

ORIGIN

Timothy Drake was just a kid when, at Haly's Circus, he witnessed the death of Dick Grayson's parents and the dramatic arrival of Batman. After seeing Batman and the original Robin in action, he recognized Robin's moves and deduced that Grayson was Robin and Bruce Wayne was Batman. Years later, Drake realized that after the death of Robin II (Jason Todd), Batman had become cold and unforgiving. When Two-Face trapped Batman and Grayson under an exploded building, Drake put on the Robin costume, saved them, and persuaded Batman to let him become the third Robin.

NOW APPEARING

After living in Keystone City and palling around with the Flash, Robin will return to a destroyed Gotham at Batman's request. The Dark Knight, no longer believing he can control the ravaged city alone, sends out the call to the Bat-family characters to help. "Robin battles a small army of villains that have been beneath Batman's notice all these months," *Robin* scribe Chuck Dixon says. "Escapees from Blackgate Prison and Arkham Asylum have gravitated towards Gotham's sewers, where Robin runs into every single one of them." And now that the Spoiler's had her baby, will Robin be changing diapers?

REPORT card

COMIC BOOK REVIEWS

BY *WIZARD* EDITORS BRIAN CUNNINGHAM, ANDREW KARDON AND MIKE SEARLE

DAREDEVIL

DD scores a Bullseye

ISSUES REVIEWED: #1-#5
GENRE: Superhero action/adventure
PUBLISHER: Marvel Comics
CREATIVE TEAM: Kevin Smith, Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti
PRICE/FREQUENCY: $2.50/Monthly (sort of)

What You Need to Know: An accident involving radioactive materials blinded Matt Murdock as a child, but somehow heightened his other senses and granted him a strange "radar sense." Armed with these superhuman senses and Olympic-level physique, attorney Matt Murdock patrols the New York streets as Daredevil, the Man Without Fear.

The Good: The art blows us away. Stylish shadows masterfully illustrate a dark and moody Manhattan setting and paint a darker Daredevil, one who actually looks like a devil at times. Great panel perspectives and action sequences (particularly those in issue #5's brutal brawl between DD and Bullseye) keep us flipping pages. And if you want stunning women, Matt's ex-girlfriends Black Widow and Karen Page have never looked better.

Not to be outdone, the story premise deals with eerie religious themes, taking a cue from Matt's Catholicism. When a seemingly supernatural child is delivered into DD's care, it creates a "Whom do you trust?" mystery leaving us wonder if he's the savior, the antichrist or neither? The dialogue is also snappy and edgy. And we find ourselves engrossed in the twisting subplots, never knowing what to expect next. In issue #2, Page reveals in the final panel that she has AIDS. In issue #3, Murdock's partner, Foggy Nelson, is accused of murder.

On top of all that, the story finally puts Bullseye (previously relegated to a bad joke) back in the bad-ass elite by snuffing Page.

The Bad: Remarkably, this cool story works against itself. The plots through issues #2-#4 coulda been one issue. On the whole, *Daredevil*'s crammed full of dialogue and thick internal monologue describing in detail the characters' feelings—page two of issue #1 has more words than most comics do in their entirety. Enough thinking already—let's have Murdock act and do something heroic for a change! (However, if the brisk pacing of issue #5 is any indication, we're betting Smith was cutting his comic writing chops early on. Hopefully, it's balls-out action from here.)

Unfortunately, our review wouldn't be complete without mentioning lateness. *Daredevil* has missed recent shipping dates which means we've been deprived of two issues we should have seen by now.

The Buzz: Hot, hot, hot! Smith sizzles as comics' hottest writer, directing *Daredevil* to the top 10 sellers list.

The Skinny: *DD* hasn't been this good since Frank Miller did it 20 years ago. With a top-notch premise and gorgeous art, we hope Marvel renews that Marvel Knights contract. ■

So far, there's a lot more thought in Daredevil *than there is action. The slow pacing of issues #2-#4 coulda been avoided if condensed to one issue.*

When a mysterious child is dropped into Matt's lap, the story takes on an eerie religious angle that plays perfectly to DD's Catholic background.

THE GRADE: B+

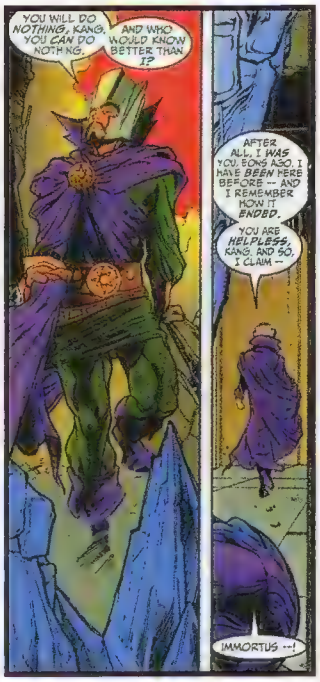
AVENGERS FOREVER

Kang bang

Issues Reviewed: #1–#5 (of 12)
Genre: Superhero action/adventure
Publisher: Marvel Comics
Creative Team: Kurt Busiek, Carlos Pacheco and Jesús Merino
Price/Frequency: $2.99/Monthly

What You Need to Know: The time-traveler Kang enlists a team of Avengers from different time periods to save Rick Jones from Immortus (who's really a much-older Kang). The team includes Wasp, Giant Man, Captain America, Hawkeye, Songbird, Yellowjacket and Captain Marvel.

The Good: Talk about an amazing concept! Bringing together Avengers to save Jones is cool, but bringing *these* Avengers together is 10 times cooler. With such an eclectic group, the interaction between them is amazing. A disillusioned Cap is plucked from 1970s issues of *Captain America*. The Songbird from the future apparently atoned for her villainous ways. Two Hank Pyms (one from the current Avengers team, one from his nutty Yellowjacket days) make for great tension. And Hawkeye—straight from the Kree-Skrull War circa 1972 *Avengers* continuity—rubs people the wrong way.



Besides the story, the art explodes off the page with energy and detail worthy of Marvel's premier superteam.

This ragtag bunch of Avengers may be neat to follow, but just as cool are the different future Avengers teams throughout the series. There's the evil Jonz Rickard (a Jones lookalike) and his army of Captain Americas, Thors and Iron Men (issue #1); or the Avengers team in the near future led by an aged Black Panther who's fighting a losing battle with alien invaders (#4). These different teams—and the core one—show what a rich and complex history the Avengers have and will always have.

The Bad: Confusion Assemble! Anytime you've got a story with Immortus *and* Kang, you've got time-travel aneurysms, especially when you've got tons of characters from different time periods to keep track of. At one point back in the Old West (#4), Songbird tells Hawkeye that he and some other Avengers will show up in a few minutes to take care of a renegade dinosaur. It's her past, Hawkeye's future and *our* headache.

Besides the Avengers, there's plenty of cameos from other Marvel heroes throughout history, pushing the guest meter into overdrive. There's also nagging questions such as: What's with Jones' powers? Where did he get them? Why is Immortus after him? One third into it, we're still scratching our heads wondering what the "point" of this series is.

With an unnecessary cardstock cover and a $2.99 price tag, fans'll have to shell out some $36 to read the entire series.

The Buzz: Besides hitting the top 25 just about every month, rumor has it that *Avengers Forever* will have major repercussions into the regular Marvel continuity.

The Skinny: Time travel always causes problems. *Avengers Forever* is no exception, but through its neat set-up and time-displaced mix of characters, this series thankfully makes the best of it. ■

As with any story involving Immortus (standing) or Kang, you're gonna have time-travel headaches. Things get crazy when we meet several Avengers teams of both the future and past.

Corralling a team of Avengers from different time periods is really neat, particularly how the members of the past interact with the current and future members.

THE GRADE: B

YOUNG JUSTICE

If only the good died young...

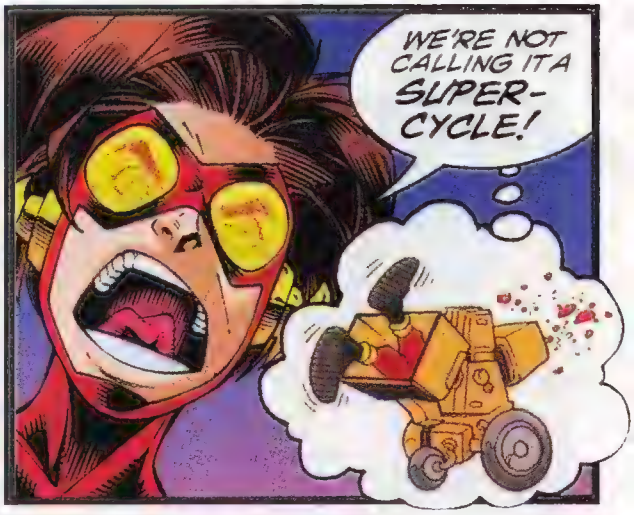
Issues Reviewed: #1-#8
Genre: Superhero action/adventure
Publisher: DC Comics
Regular Team: Peter David, Todd Nauck and Larry Stucker
Price/Frequency: $2.50/Monthly

What You Need to Know: Six teenage heroes—Robin, Superboy, Impulse, Arrowette, Wonder Girl and Secret—have joined forces to become sort of a junior Justice League. Working out of an old JLA headquarters with the Red Tornado as its chaperone, Young Justice fights evil around the world.

The Good: With such jokey and playful characters as Impulse and Superboy, you'd expect there to be some laughs in this title, and there are. The team wakes up the Red Tornado—who had withdrawn from humanity—because Robin, Impulse and Superboy annoyed the hell out of him (issue #1). During a camping trip in issue #7, Arrowette plays Truth or Dare with Impulse, who chooses dare, which is no fun—since he's so impulsive, he'll do just about anything.

The Bad: Pee-yew! Most of the jokes in here are real stinkers. Not to mention that there's waaaaay too many of them forced into each issue. Where to begin? The villainess Mighty Endowed (#1), who can't stand up 'cause her boobs are too big. The government agents Fite 'N' Maad (Get it, "fightin' mad"?). The Super-Cycle acting like a puppy, and actually choosing Robin over its real master Rip Roar (#2). A young, unfunny Mxyzptlk terrorizes the gang in #3. A computer cult in #3 tries summoning demons with phrases such "DOSEE DOSE...LIDDLELAMSEDIVEE..." (say it to yourself out loud and you'll get it). Issue #6 saw a break out at the zoo with Young Justice saying (no lie), "He's released lions! And tigers! And bears! Oh my." Get the picture?

Besides forcing one lame joke after another down

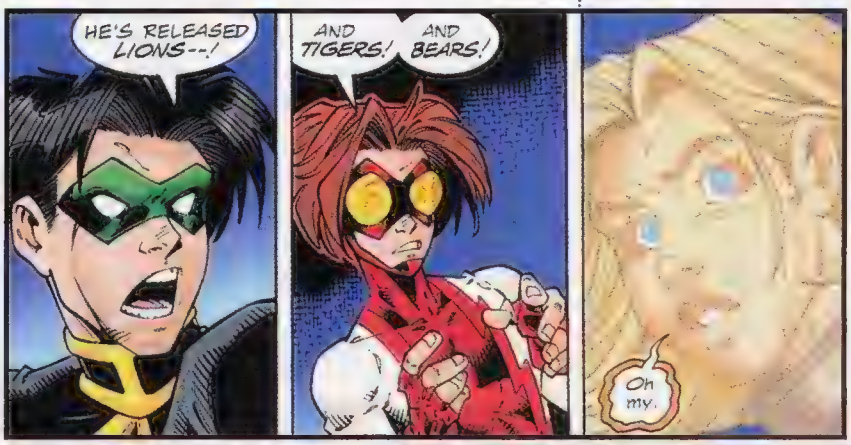


readers' throats, *Young Justice* never takes the time to even explain just *why* these guys are together. Issue #1 begins with the three guys already as a team, with no explanation for how or why. Then the girls join a few issues later, again with no explanation as to how, why or even when they joined!

And then there's the forgettable villains that seem to play the unfortunate straight man to Young Justice's slapstick routine. There's Despero, normally a sick, twisted villain, who acts more like an angry, somewhat mindless Hulk (#6). The intelligent, sword-wielding Harm (#5) sounds as if he was created solely for the tag line joke: "Stay out of Harm's way." And Mxyzptlk is bad enough when he's *trying* to be funny; play him straight and he's a downright stupid character.

The Buzz: Starring some pretty popular sidekicks, *Young Justice* manages to rank in the middle of the Top 100 each month. May's *Young Justice in No Man's Land* one-shot will likely attract new readers with the Batman tie-in.

The Skinny: From stories to villains to titles, *Young Justice* is one big joke. A bad one at that. ■



In rare moments, a joke will shine through and make you laugh. It's too bad you might miss it in a crowd of lame ones.

The only thing worse than no humor? Bad humor. And Young Justice drowns in it.

THE GRADE: D-

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FULL 'MOON' FEVER

Stormy seas pose no problem for super-teen Sailor Moon

Come sail away with this superteen and learn what it's *really* like to be a heroine.

Bunny is a typical, Japanese high school freshman—more or less. She's sweet, kind and cute, but also a lazy, crybaby glutton who longs for an escape from an oppressive world of pop quizzes and Japanese cram school. When a mysterious talking black cat named Luna offers her the chance to live the life of her idol, superheroine Sailor V, Bunny seizes it with gusto. With the power of a magic brooch given to her by Luna, she becomes Sailor Moon, stylish, superpowered defender of love and justice!

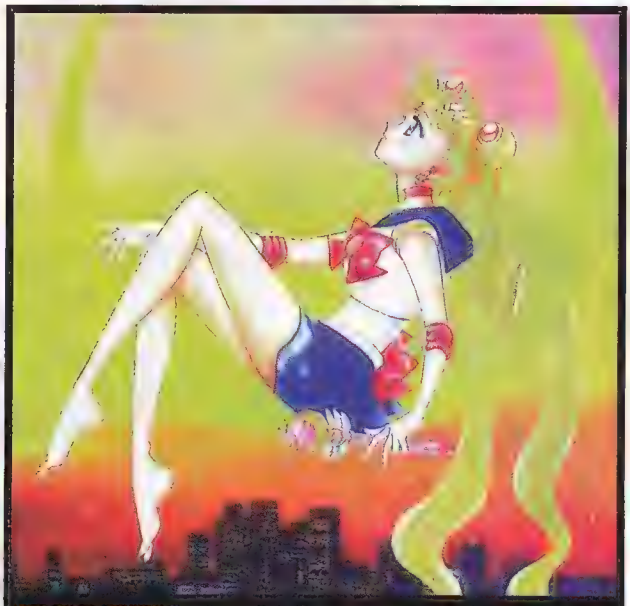
Sadly, Bunny's new superhero status doesn't quite measure up to expectations. Oh, the cool uniform, great accessories and nifty superpowers—such as killer tiara attacks and morphing abilities—are all perfectly dreamy, but for some reason, she wasn't expecting to have to fight awful, evil, dead things trying to kill her! In her first battle as Sailor Moon, Bunny must defeat an evil being disguised as her best friend's mother and beat back hordes of mind-controlled but otherwise innocent women. Pretty heavy stuff for a first superhero outing.

The evil things are agents of the Dark Kingdom, led by Queen Beryl and her four generals: Jedeite, Nephrite, Zoisite and Kunzite. Beryl is searching Japan for the Silver Imperium Crystal, an energy stone which will allow her to rule the universe.

But stopping Beryl isn't Sailor Moon's primary mission—locating Princess Serenity, the long-lost ruler of the Moon, is. To aid her in her search, four other superpowered, high-school champions join her side—clever Amy as Sailor Mercury, fiery Raye as Sailor Mars, boy-crazy Lita as Sailor Jupiter and cheerful Mina as Sailor Moon's idol, Sailor "V" Venus. Of course, since the Moon Princess has the Imperium Crystal, these Sailor Scouts and Beryl cross paths many times before their final showdown.

Along the way, Bunny finds love in the form of Tuxedo Mask, her dashing knight protector, who is himself pursuing the Crystal and may or may not be on her side. Gradually, it's revealed that Bunny and Tuxedo Mask (a.k.a. upperclassman Darien Shields) shared a forbidden love in their past lives. In fact, all players in this game—good and bad alike—have lived and fought before.

BY PAUL SUDLOW



NOT BUGS, BUNNY! Superheroine Sailor Moon received her powers from a magic brooch—and her fashion sense from Stevie Wonder.

The *Sailor Moon* saga began in the summer of 1991, when creator Naoko Takeuchi penned a short series called *Code-name Sailor V*, featuring the adventures of Sailor V and her talking white cat Artemis. The shojo, or girls' comic, went over so well Takeuchi fleshed out the concept and launched *Sailor Moon* a year later, this time with young Usagi Tsukino at the helm—better known in the States as Serena, a.k.a. Bunny.

Changing the focus from Sailor Venus to Sailor Moon was a master stroke. Sailor V—beautiful, brave and clever—was a typical shojo heroine, even a bit clichéd. Klutzy Bunny—insecure, worried about her grades, obsessed with cute boys and food—was anything but clichéd, and adolescent girls took to her instantly. *Sailor Moon*, in both manga and anime form, has been going gangbusters around the world ever since.

A large part of *Sailor Moon*'s allure stems from its artwork. Takeuchi draws *Sailor Moon* in a sketchy, airy style which perfectly suits her tale of ethereal adventure and timeless romance. The girls are leggy and bold, the women suave, and the men—enemies and allies alike—androgynous and far too beautiful for their own good. It's classic shojo, in other words. The stories are melodramatic to the extreme, but because Takeuchi brings her heroines' inner thoughts, fears and hopes to the page, she endears them to the reader to such an extent that readers are pulling for them no matter how much the plot hits the violins.

Interestingly, the manga is aimed at a slightly older audience than the anime. The violence is a bit more graphic and the love scenes a bit steamier. At one point while cuddling with Tuxedo Mask, Bunny wonders if she's ready for sex. This ain't Cartoon Network material, boys and girls.

The manga is peppered with comments by Takeuchi to her American fans in small sidebars alongside the art. Kudos to Takeuchi and publisher Mixx Entertainment for keeping a constant flow of communication between creator and American fan—it isn't something we're used to seeing out of manga artists Rumiko Takahashi or Hayao Miyazaki, or American comic legends Frank Miller and Todd McFarlane for that matter.

Sailor Moon is published monthly by Mixx at $2.95 a pop. Two graphic novels are available as of this writing for $11.95 and $9.95 respectively (see this month's "Manga Picks" for news of a third novel). *Sailor Moon Super S*, a story arc taken from later in the series, runs monthly in Mixx's mag for girls, *Smile*. In Japan, the manga ran for 18 graphic novels.

Wizard Entertainment editor Paul Sudlow only punishes evildoers in the name of love and justice on Tuesdays. (The same day he'll gladly pay you for a hamburger today.)

ANIMEPICK

ANIME FILM OF THE MONTH

The Adventures of Kotetsu

(A.D.V. Films, 60 minutes, $19.98 dubbed and $29.95 subtitled)

Sexy Miho Kuon is an ace private investigator, but not a particularly principled one. So it isn't surprising that one of her blackmail targets hires an assassin to rub her out. But just as he prepares to strike, a cute, feisty country girl bops onto the scene carrying a big sword—and all bets are off.

Elegant but tomboyish Linn Suzuki, a.k.a. "Kotetsu," is a warrior girl from the high country who came to the big city to escape the evil clutches of the ancient witch who raised her. All she wants is to find her brother, but she finds plenty of trouble instead, including obsessed dryads, zombies and even a society of evil magicians.

"Kotetsu" is a wickedly fun show filled with cute, battlin' babes and dastardly bad guys. Fans will only get a taste of the overall plot in these first two episodes, but the producers do a good job of keeping the action going as they set up their story. ■ PS

MANGAPICKS

MUST-READ JAPANESE COMICS SHIPPING IN MAY

Sailor Moon Vol. 3 Graphic Novel

MIXX ENTERTAINMENT

Well, having spent a whole article covering *Sailor Moon*, we'd be remiss in not pointing out that Mixx's third *Sailor Moon* graphic novel is due out this very month. Witness the final clash between evil Queen Beryl and Sailor Moon, wherein more than one Sailor Scout sacrifices her life to protect the Moon Princess. The saga shifts gears after that, moving into the Black Moon plotline which corresponds to the second season of the anime series, "Sailor Moon R." $9.95

Call Me Princess #1

CPM MANGA

Shojo manga continue to land on American shores. CPM weighs in this month with *Call Me Princess*, a series by Tomoko Taniguchi which brings the shojo sensibility to the bittersweet world of first loves. Meet Mako, a high school freshman with a heart for two boys—her first love Yo and newly arrived bad boy Ryu. Love triangles don't end well, so Mako and the gang are no doubt in for a rough ride. $2.95

Shadow Lady: The Eyes of a Stranger #1

DARK HORSE COMICS

Cute young Aimi—wallflower by day and daring burglar by night—has fallen thoroughly in love with super-cop Bright. Unfortunately, she has no idea what to do about it, because Bright has fallen in love with her alter ego Shadow Lady, not her own demure self. She's still dithering about what to do when fate delivers to her an afternoon with Bright. Will she break down her wall of shyness and let him know her feelings, or will she hide behind Shadow Lady's extroverted nature once again? $2.50

Darkminds #1/2

IMAGE COMICS

Darkminds continues to wow the masses, and fans have no doubt wondered about the origins of the cyborg cop Akane Nakiko, who showed up on the scene with no memory of her past life as a regular human. All is revealed in Dreamwave's first prequel comic, which relates her first adventures as a cyborg creation of high tech corporation SIU. This book includes a bevy of sketches and concept art no *Darkminds* fan will want to be without. $2.50 ■ PS

COMIC MARKET NEWS AND SUCH by Lars Pearson

MARKET WATCH

'ARIA' MOVES LIKE MAGIC

Avalon's hit looks beautiful

Are ya buying *Aria*?

More and more fans in this artist-driven market are, drawn in by the stunning pencils of newcomer (and former dentist!) Jay Anacleto.

Previews of the art abounded, but *Aria* #1 was still underordered, and shut-out fans are now paying. The "regular" *Aria* #1 is moving briskly at $3 to $4, and as usual, a few interesting variants are also available, including:

• **Stone Preview**—This hype vehicle featured five pages of black-and-white, wordless Aria preview pages and pinup art. Technically, there wasn't any actual Aria story, so this can't count as a first appearance. Still, in a world where readers are going ballistic for choice Aria material, the preview runs as high as $20 on Internet sales.

On a curious note, *Stone Preview* "Museum" variants, featuring parchment-style covers, were made for retailer Jimmy Jay and Co. Stone, Hellcop and Aria covers were available, and the Aria version was limited to *only 100 copies*! Ironic, since each is an easy $100 in the bank these days.

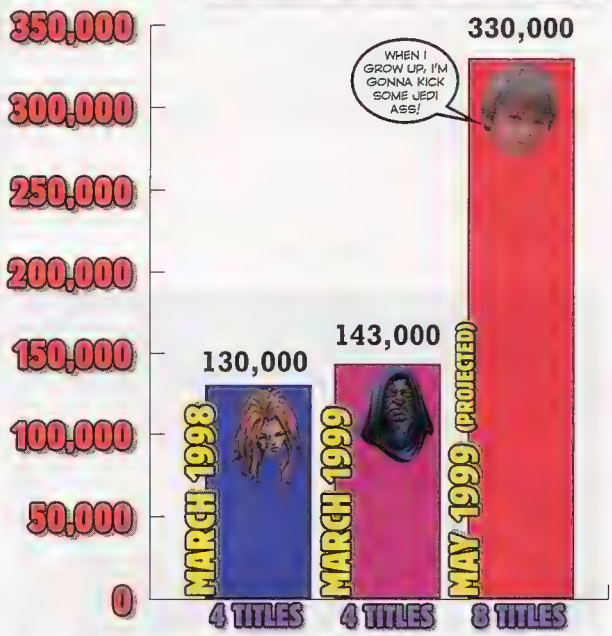
• **Aria Preview**—Here's Aria's first appearance—an *original* Aria text story, lavished with illustrations by Jay Anacleto, that has never been reprinted. This baby's real hot and cold on the Internet, ranging from $5 to $25 on any given day, but there's no doubt it's selling.

• **Aria #1 Museum Edition**—Again, Jimmy Jay and Co. provided a mere 100 parchment-style copies of the *Aria* #1 with the Jay Anacleto cover. Another 100 copies sported a variant by *Fathom* artist Michael Turner. Like the *Stone Preview*, they're handy $100 items—if you can find 'em.

But as with many books—*Battle Chasers* and *Danger Girl* being prime examples—*Aria* will likely live or die based on its shipping schedule. Can Anacleto keep up the work? Tune in and find out.

HELLO, BABY! Kildare, the main character in Aria, sure is purty. Think she's busy this Friday?

MASSIVE FORCE As we get nearer to the prequel movies, Dark Horse Comics' Star Wars sales are soaring.



(Source: Diamond Comic Distribution. Figures represent initial direct-market orders.)

UNDERTAKER BURIES COMPETITION

Wrestling gimmicks that work: a steel chair to the head and an *Undertaker* comic.

If you watch WWF wrestling, you already know the Undertaker as commander of the Ministry of Darkness, a pack of dark wrestlers who do his bidding. Undertaker fans are legion, and Chaos! Comics is accordingly turning *Undertaker* into one of the biggest cross-media events of the year.

The *Undertaker* comic has already been heavily promoted on official Websites for the Undertaker and the WWF, plus a deal with the Sci-Fi Channel is going down. That gives Chaos! access to *millions* of buyers who don't usually read comics, and here are some of the bits these fans are trying to get:

• **Undertaker #1 art/photo covers**—Photo covers are standard for mainstream, celebrity-driven books, and these standard versions of #1 are already moving up a buck or two. Expect every *Undertaker* issue to have split covers like these.

• **Premium Greg Capullo cover**—A tasty variant from *Spawn* artist Greg Capullo, limited to 5,000 copies and available from Chaos! for $10.

• **Dynamic Forces "Death Chrome" variant**—Exclusive to the retailer, drawn by Dan Jurgens (*Thor*).

• **WrestleMania XV Foil Edition**—Nice, but available only if you order the event on pay-per-view. The first 15,000 people who send in their cable statement get a foil variant of the standard *Undertaker* #1 cover.

• **Sci-Fi Channel Edition**—The Undertaker hosted a number of new Sci-Fi premieres, and made a guest appearance on the new "Poltergeist: The Legacy" in the role of "the Soul Chaser." To celebrate this, the Sci-Fi Channel is offering a variant cover drawn by *Undertaker* artist Manny Clark as an online exclusive. As with most exclusives, if you want it, act now. If you wait too long, it could be a nail in your coffin.

ALEX ROSS, YET AGAIN

They finally figured it out.

Though super-painter Alex Ross is known for high-profile work such as *Marvels*, *Kingdom Come* and *Superman: Peace on Earth*, the high print runs of those books make price increases kinda small. But some early Ross work was on low-tier projects (Hey, we *all* gotta pay our dues!) and fans are finally realizing

PHOTOS: BUSIEK, SMITH, KELLY, HUBERT, MADUREIRA, ROSS, TURNER, WAID, QUESADA, LARSEN BY PAUL SCHRADER; CAMPBELL BY JOHN M. MCDONOUGH; MORRISON BY BOB MARTIN; PÉREZ BY BOB SMITH; JURGENS, DAVIS BY WIZARD; GARTH ENNIS PHOTO COURTESY MAUREEN MCTIGUE. TRAVIS CHAREST PHOTO BY WIZARD. PAUL JENKINS PHOTO COURTESY PAUL JENKINS. JAY ANACLETO PHOTO COURTESY JAY ANACLETO. JAE LEE AND TRAVIS CHAREST: PHOTO BY WIZARD STAFF. AUSTIN POWERS PHOTO BLAKE LITTLE/© 1997 NEW LINE CINEMA

TOP 10 CREATORS

IT'S MOD, BABY!

FAN FAVORITES

These are the fave creators, baby. Crazy cats whose name sells the book, y'know? *Wizard's* Top 10 Creators lists come from a groovy retailer survey. Artists include pencilers and painters. Smashing, baby!

WRITERS

1. Kurt Busiek
Avengers, Thunderbolts

2. Kevin Smith
Clerks, Daredevil

3. Mark Waid
Captain America, Flash

4. Garth Ennis
Preacher, Hitman

5. Grant Morrison
JLA, The Invisibles

6. Dan Jurgens
Thor

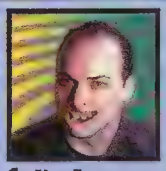
7. Alan Davis
X-Men, Uncanny X-Men

8. Paul Jenkins
Inhumans

9. Joe Kelly
Deadpool

10. Erik Larsen
Wolverine, Savage Dragon

ARTISTS



1. Alex Ross
Earth X

2. Adam Kubert
Uncanny X-Men

3. Joe Madureira
Battle Chasers

4. J. Scott Campbell
Danger Girl

5. George Pérez
Avengers

6. Michael Turner
Fathom

7. Joe Quesada
Daredevil, Ash

8. Jae Lee
Inhumans

9. Jay Anacleto
Aria

10. Travis Charest
Wildcats

BURIED TREASURE

KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR THIS

TOTAL ECLIPSE #1

After Todd McFarlane bought the defunct Eclipse Comics library of characters, he released a tasty little treat: this totally-under-the-radar *Total Eclipse* comic with a minuscule print run of (Get this!) a mere 7,000 copies. And yes, that is a number embarrassingly small by Todd McFarlane Productions standards.

The issue profiled many new character designs for the Eclipse gang, and in 1999, at least two new titles–*Black Terror* and *Todd McFarlane's Twisted Tales*–are expected to spin out of its pages. Come 2000, who knows how many more may appear? With a legion of McFarlane fans out there, watch for *Total Eclipse*–a damn cheap buy today at $4–to come into the light. ■ LP

this work exists.

Ross' first work, the *Terminator: The Burning Earth* mini-series from Now Comics, formerly quarter-bin cheese, is now scorching at $6 or more the copy. More significantly, Ross also painted *Clive Barker's Hellraiser* #17—a mere three issues before the book's cancellation, when the entire Epic Comics line was floundering. In a classic case of micro-supply and mega-demand, it now goes for a whopping $17—if you can find one, that is. And one final note for the future: If this keeps up, watch out for *Sandman Mystery Theatre Annual* #1. It was a low-ordered Vertigo book that contained—surprise, surprise!—Ross' first DC work.

SMMMMOKIN'! Comic Math 101: Ian Churchill plus a distribution screw-up equals one hot book.

COVEN GATHERS FANS

The book starring Phenomena has become a phenomenon.

A free warning about *Coven* (vol. 2) #1, January's smash-hit sellout in many stores: Writer Jeph Loeb (upcoming: *Superman*) is no lightweight, but whereas Loeb also works for DC, *Coven* artist Ian Churchill is exclusive to Awesome Entertainment—and fans apparently can't get enough of him. Churchill's popularity is even more impressive when you take into account the fact that his art skill is self-taught.

Not that it should have happened, but a recent priniting and shipping goof where a Dynamic Forces-exclusive cover was switched with a mainstream cover featuring the Coven member Scratch generated some good buzz for the book. The few retailers who got Scratch covers were convinced that they had a rare-as-all-hell variant, while some looked at the Dynamic cover and thought the same thing. Prices rose on *Coven* #1 across the board, and the overall exposure was terrific for the book. Bottom line? The Coven is definitely a new superhero group to keep your eye on.

You should keep your eye on Wizard *Price Guide Manager Lars Pearson, lest he steal your lutefisk.*

RETAILER NETWORK & V.I.P.s

RELIABLE SOURCES

Bruno Andreacchi
B.A.'s Comics & Nostalgia
121 Oxford St. East London
Ontario, Canada NGA 1T4
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Chris Barchuk
Wizard World
Rockland Center
51 E. Rt. 59
Nanuet, NY 10954
(914) 624-2224

Dave Braunstein
Eldorado Comics
2110 E. Rt. 70
Cherry Hill, NJ 08034
(609) 489-1199

Rich Conley
Heroes & Fantasies
914 Pat Brooker Road
Universal City, TX 78148
(210) 945-9884

D. Roberts & J. Walker
Legends Comics
Kentucky Oaks Mall
5101 Hinkleville Rd.
Paducah, KY 42001
(612) 822-2806

Dash Hobbeheydar &
Mark Laskowski
And Then it Rained Comics
P.O. Box 11041
Scottsdale, AZ 85271
(602) 990-9224

Steve Huber
Galaxy Comics
10 North 36th Street
Richmond, IN 47374
(765) 962-8239

Brian Kozicki & John Cathell
Buried Under Comics
188 West Middle Turnpike
Manchester, CT 06040
(860) 643-7295

Ivan Matos
Comic Connection
2128-C Fort Campbell Blvd.
Clarksville, TN 37042
(615) 572-9588

Ron McClure
American Comics and Cards
6787 Lee Highway
Chattanooga, TN 37421
(423) 490-0501

Avrom Oliver
Adventures in Comics & Games
6026 Fair Oaks Blvd.
Carmichael, CA 95608
(916) 973-9064

Jerry Ringi
Amazing Fantasy
4300 Portsmouth Blvd.
Suite 192
Chesapeake, VA 23321
(757) 465-8390

Tom Shea
TJ Collectibles
160 Main St.
Milford, MA 01757
(508) 473-5874

Steve Snyder
Central City Comics
1460 Bethel Rd.
Columbus, OH 43220
(614) 459-5045

Joel Thingvall
Nostalgia Zone
3149 1/2 Hennepin Ave. S.
Minneapolis, MN 55406
(612) 822-2806

Doug Miers
Comics Conspiracy
115 A. East Fremont Ave.
Sunnyville, CA 94087
(408) 245-6275

Stuart Wagner
Caveman
1344 E. Battlefield
Springfield, MO 65804
(417) 882-2283

Robert Scott
Comickaze Comics
& Sportscards
5515 Balboa Ave.
San Diego, CA 92111
(619) 278-0371

Nolan Wyatt
Golden Apple Comics
7711 Melrose
Los Angeles, CA 90046
(213) 658-6047

Todd McDevitt
New Dimension Comics
Units 20-21
20550 Rte. 19
Cranberry Township, PA
16066-7520
(412) 776-0433

Phil Davis
B & D Comic Shop
802 Elm St. South West
Roanoke, VA 24016
(703) 342-6642

Damon McCulloch
Comics & Comix
6135 Sunrise Blvd.
Citrus Heights, CA 95610
(916) 969-0717

Robert Letscher II
Key Comics
PO Box 3855
Scottsdale, AZ 85271-3855
(602) 949-8499

John Chrusckinski &
Bruce Ellsworth
Tropic Comics
313 S. State Rd. #7
Plantation, FL 33317

James Elkins
Comic Connection
21280 Ft. Campbell Blvd.
Clarksville, TN 37042
(615) 572-9588

David Beauchamp
Penguin Comics
3315 S. Welwood
Springfield, MO 65804
(417) 551-2051

John Graziano
Comics Plus
1383 Highway 35
Middletown, NJ 07748
(908) 706-0102

Mark Thompson
Cold Cuts
5704 Calmor Ave. #1
San Jose, CA 95123
(408) 229-0930

Jamie Graham
5 East Chicago Ave.
Naperville, IL 60540
(630) 778-0700

Mike Johnson
Golden Apple
7711 Melrose Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90046

Brian Johnson
All About Books & Comics
517 E. Camelback
Phoenix, AZ 85012
(602) 277-0757

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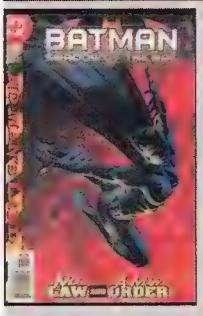
TOP 10 comics

***Wizard*, by staying in touch with hundreds of retailers throughout the country, keeps a close eye on the country's hottest back issues. These are the books ringing the registers this month...**

1 BATMAN: SHADOW OF THE BAT #83



WRITER: Bob Gale
ARTISTS: Alex Maleev and Wayne Faucher

Urban renewal sucks. When the city's layin' new roads and water mains, traffic gets snarled and you can't even cross the street to get to Taco Bell. A viable option? Earthquake! Hey, it worked for Batman. This new Gotham-destroyed-by-earthquake "No Man's Land" storyline is clicking big-time, and the debut of a new and improved Batgirl in this ish has fans slobberin' after copies double-quick. Now if only Batman could do something about the lack of parking. **LAST MONTH: 2**

2 WHAT IF...? (VOL. 2) #105

WRITERS: Tom DeFalco and Ron Frenz
ARTISTS: Ron Frenz and Bill Sienkiewicz

What if a *What If...?* book actually mattered? Hey, it happened! Few paid attention when Spider-Girl made her first appearance in this ish. But when the entire Marvel "MC2" line grew up around li'l May Parker, fans came outta their holes and took notice. Now the same fans who didn't give a crap two years ago are sellin' their own plasma to get enough dough to latch on to a copy today. You've come a long way, baby. **LAST MONTH: 1**

3 POKÉMON: THE ELECTRIC TALE OF PIKACHU #1

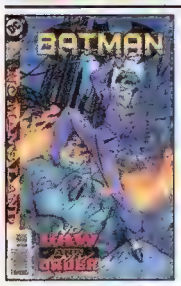
WRITER: Toshihiro Ono
ARTIST: Toshihiro Ono

Remember Eddie Grant? The dreadlocked reggae guy who had the early '80s pop hit "Electric Avenue"? Word is he's making a comeback. But this time, we're gonna rock down to...Electric Pikachu! That is, if Eddie can fork over the massive licensing fee to Nintendo. **LAST MONTH: 7**

4 EARTH X #1

WRITERS: Jim Krueger and Alex Ross
ARTISTS: John Paul Leon and Bill Reinhold

Alex Ross, painter supreme, is today's biggest artist. He's so big, when he just *writes* and does covers for a new series, it's a huge hit. And thus, *Earth X* is a huge hit. The only thing that'll be bigger? *Earth XXX*, the upcoming...uh..."adults only" version. **LAST MONTH: NOT RATED (N.R.)**



5 BATMAN #563

WRITER: Bob Gale
ARTISTS: Alex Maleev and Wayne Faucher

Newcomer Bob Gale (the "Back to the Future" movie writer) has blown into comics like a *gale*-force wind! Whew! We've been sitting on that lame joke for four months. Thank God it's finally out there. And, as stated above, "No Man's Land" is huge. So people dig this book. **LAST MONTH: N.R.**

6 INHUMANS #1

WRITER: Paul Jenkins
ARTIST: Jae Lee

About four months into its run, comic fans discovered that *Inhumans* was the greatest thing since the remote control. They collectively said, "Hey! This is the greatest thing since the remote control. I must have it." And there's *Inhumans* #1, suddenly going for, like, triple cover price. **LAST MONTH: 3**

7 ARIA #1

WRITER: Brian Holguin
ARTIST: Jay Anacleto

Is it Kodak, or is it Jay Anacleto? The *Aria* artist's style is so beautiful and lifelike, you'll poke your eyes out after this issue 'cause you just *know* you'll never see anything better. The only problem? People who've poked their eyes out rarely come back for a #2 issue. Whatta shame. **LAST MONTH: N.R.**

8 DAREDEVIL #1

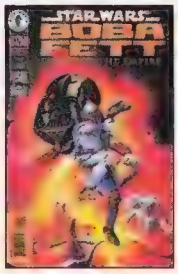
WRITER: Kevin Smith
ARTISTS: Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti

Remember that issue of *Daredevil* where "Clerks" screenwriter Kevin Smith had DD drone on about the tough life of a register jockey? No? That's 'cause there wasn't one. *Daredevil* has instead been filled with bust-'em-up fights and dramatic cliffhangers. That's why the kids dig it. **LAST MONTH: 6**

9 BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER #1

WRITER: Andi Watson
ARTISTS: Joe Bennett and Rick Ketcham

And kids dig *Buffy* because of the little-known (but still important) 11th and 12th Commandments. No. 11: Thou shalt watch TV shows starring chicks in tight sweaters. No. 12: Thou shalt buy the comic spin-off from said show. So let it be written. So let it be done. **LAST MONTH: 4**



10 STAR WARS: BOBA FETT—ENEMY OF THE EMPIRE #1

WRITER: John Wagner
ARTIST: Ian Gibson

For having only 48 seconds of screen time and two lines in three movies, this Boba Fett cat sure gets lots of play. But "Star Wars" is bigger than nickel beer, and the 'Fettman's new series is kickin' ass and not even bothering to take names. **LAST MONTH: N.R.**

THE HIGHEST-ORDERED BOOKS FOR THE MONTH OF **MARCH**

TOP 100

Compiled by the *Wizard* Price Guide staff using data supplied by Diamond Comic Distributors.

X-vet Adam Kubert begins his new gig on *Uncanny X-Men* with issue #368.

1. Uncanny X-Men #368 (Marvel)
2. X-Men #88 (Marvel)
3. Spawn: The Dark Ages #1 (Todd McFarlane/Image)
4. Spawn #84 (Todd McFarlane/Image)
5. Avengers #16 (Marvel)
6. Wolverine #138 (Marvel)
7. Earth X #2 (Marvel)
8. JLA #29 (DC)
9. Magneto Rex #1 (Marvel)
10. Daredevil #7 (Marvel)
11. Fathom #6 (Top Cow/Image)
12. Amazing Spider-Man #5 (Marvel)
13. Fantastic Four #17 (Marvel)
14. Peter Parker: Spider-Man #5 (Marvel)
15. Thor #11 (Marvel)
16. Captain America #17 (Marvel)
17. Hulk #2 (Marvel)
18. Gambit #4 (Marvel)
19. Avengers Forever #6 (Marvel)
20. Iron Man #16 (Marvel)
21. Wildcats #2 (WildStorm/DC)
22. Mutant X #8 (Marvel)
23. Spider-Man: Chapter One #0 (Marvel)
24. Spider-Man: Chapter One #7 (Marvel)
25. Darkness #23 (Top Cow/Image)
26. Crimson #10 (WildStorm/DC)
27. Witchblade Infinity (Top Cow/Image)
28. All-Star Comics #1 (DC)
29. Generation X #51 (Marvel)
30. Batman #565 (DC)
31. X-Force #90 (Marvel)
32. All-Star Comics #2 (DC)
33. Inhumans #7 (Marvel)
34. Green Lantern #112 (DC)
35. Titans #3 (DC)
36. Mutant X 1999 (Marvel)
37. Detective Comics #732 (DC)
38. Cable #67 (Marvel)
39. Astro City #17 (WildStorm/DC)
40. X-Man #51 (Marvel)
41. Spider-Girl #8 (Marvel)
42. Buffy the Vampire Slayer #7 (Dark Horse)
43. Thunderbolts #26 (Marvel)
44. All-American Comics #1 (DC)
45. National Comics #1 (DC)
46. Adventure Comics #1 (DC)
47. Sensation Comics #1 (DC)
48. KISS: The Psycho Circus #18 (Todd McFarlane/Image)
49. Nightwing #31 (DC)
50. Thrilling Comics #1 (DC)
51. Smash Comics #1 (DC)
52. Star-Spangled Comics #1 (DC)
53. Nova #1 (Marvel)
54. Buffy the Vampire Slayer: Origin #3 (Dark Horse)
55. Preacher #49 (Vertigo/DC)
56. Authority #1 (WildStorm/DC)
57. Superman #144 (DC)
58. Batman: Shadow of the Bat #85 (DC)
59. Action Comics #754 (DC)
60. Black Panther #7 (Marvel)
61. Adventures of Superman #567 (DC)
62. Superman: The Man of Steel #88 (DC)
63. Flash #148 (DC)
64. Batman & Superman: World's Finest #2 (DC)
65. Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight #117 (DC)
66. Young Justice #8 (DC)
67. Deadpool #28 (Marvel)
68. Gen^{13} #39 (WildStorm/DC)
69. Star Wars: Vader's Quest #2 (Dark Horse)
70. Star Wars: Boba Fett—Enemy of the Empire #3 (D.H.)
71. Captain America: Sentinel of Liberty #9 (Marvel)
72. Star Wars #4 (Dark Horse)
73. Webspinners: Tales of Spider-Man #5 (Marvel)
74. Ascension #15 (Top Cow/Image)
75. Undertaker: Prophecy of the Dead #1 (Chaos!)
76. Robin #64 (DC)
77. Star Wars: Crimson Empire II #5 (Dark Horse)
78. Doctor Strange #4 (Marvel)
79. A-Next #8 (Marvel)
80. Catwoman #68 (DC)
81. Planetary #2 (WildStorm/DC)
82. The Crow #2 (Todd McFarlane/Image)
83. The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen #3 (WildStorm/DC)
84. The Tenth: Black Embrace #2 (Image)
85. Aria: Blanc & Noir #1 (Avalon/Image)
86. Supergirl #32 (DC)
87. Glory #0 (Awesome)
88. J2 #8 (Marvel)
89. Batman: Joker's Apprentice (DC)
90. Anarky #1 (DC)
91. Wonder Woman #144 (DC)
92. Lady Pendragon #0 (Image)
93. Hourman #2 (DC)
94. Martian Manhunter #6 (DC)
95. Starman #53 (DC)
96. Pokémon: Pikachu Shocks Back #1 (Viz)
97. Legends of the DC Universe #16 (DC)
98. Justice League of America Super Spectacular #1 (DC)
99. Slingers #6 (Marvel)
100. Birds of Prey #5 (DC)

TOP100 HIGHLIGHTS

SPAWN: DARK AGES, BRIGHT SALES

Spawn: The Dark Ages #1 (No. 3)
Not bad for a book that doesn't even deal with Al Simmons, the present-day Spawn we all know (it instead chronicles a medieval-era Spawn with the hounds of Hell...uh...hounding him, we guess). 'Course, its strong showing also got a boost from a one-in-four variant cover by Todd McFarlane to push sales over the parent *Spawn* title.

Magneto Rex #1 (No. 9)
The big X-dollar is still there, folks. On the plus side, Magneto's always been the top X-Men villain, and artist Brandon Peterson kicks ass. But conversely, *Magneto Rex* isn't heavily connected to the other X-Men titles, thus it came in a bit lower than January's *X-Men: The Magneto War* one-shot. That it ranked No. 9 is a tribute to this book's magnetism. Ba-dum-BUM! (Shoot us. Please.)

Batman core books (Nos. 30, 37, 58, 65)
The gaps in Bat-sales made sense a year ago, but not when the Batman books are interconnected by the "No Man's Land" story arc. It's hard to believe that anyone would buy *Batman* and only *Batman*, reading but one part of a bigger story. Retailers seem to disagree–they ordered about 20 percent more *Batman* than *Shadow of the Bat* and *Legends of the Dark Knight*. If this continues, we could see quick price increases in the rarer lower-tier Bat-books in coming months.

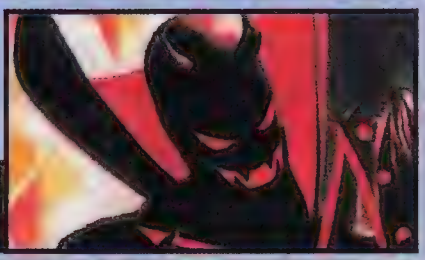
Undertaker: Prophecy of the Dead #1 (No. 75)
You can hit us with a folding chair if you want, but with wrestling mania out of control, there's *no way* you can convince us this book wasn't underordered. The same fate befell January's *Undertaker Preview*–and now that book is going for $5 minimum. *Undertaker* #1 easily beat *Preview*'s ranking, but if you don't mind a prophecy from the living, read this one: *Undertaker* #1 will soon be a back-issue body-slammer.

Pokémon: Pikachu Shocks Back #1 (No. 96)
Pokémon's a phenomenon sweeping the nation, right? Yet the latest *Pikachu Shocks Back* was still ordered cautiously, despite the high demand of the earlier *Pokémon: The Electric Tale of Pikachu* #1. *Electric Tale* landed at a paltry No. 164 last November and is selling for 14 bucks as a back issue–a price tag that even a second printing can't slow down. Don't be surprised when *Pikachu Shocks Back* sells for double its cover price by June.

TEARS OF A CLOWN Hard to believe Alan Moore, Bart Sears and even Spawn couldn't keep *Violator* outta the quarter bins.

CLOSE-UPLOOK

Break it on down now! Here's a look at the top-selling books in a couple of categories, with their overall Diamond Comic Distributors "Top 300" rankings in parentheses.



'X' MARKS THE SPOT Is Alex Ross king of the world? He is if it's his *own* world, like *Earth X*. Just ask Daredevil here–he'll tell ya.

TOP TEN MINI-SERIES

1. Earth X #2 (Marvel, No. 7)
2. Magneto Rex #1 (Marvel, No. 9)
3. Avengers Forever #6 (Marvel, No. 19)
4. Spider-Man: Chapter One #0 (Marvel, No. 23)
5. Spider-Man: Chapter One #7 (Marvel, No. 24)
6. All-Star Comics #1 (DC, No. 28)
7. All-Star Comics #2 (DC, No. 32)
8. Buffy the Vampire Slayer: Origin #3 (Dark Horse, No. 54)
9. Batman & Superman: World's Finest #2 (DC, No. 64)
10. Star Wars: Vader's Quest #2 (Dark Horse, No. 69)

TOP TEN FEMALE-LEAD BOOKS

1. Fathom #6 (Top Cow/Image, No. 11)
2. Witchblade Infinity (Top Cow/Image, No. 27)
3. Spider-Girl #8 (Marvel, No. 41)
4. Buffy the Vampire Slayer #7 (Dark Horse, No. 42)
5. Sensation Comics #1 (DC, No. 47)
6. Buffy the Vampire Slayer: Origin #3 (Dark Horse, No. 54)
7. Catwoman #68 (DC, No. 80)
8. Aria: Blanc & Noir #1 (Avalon/Image, No. 85)
9. Supergirl #32 (DC, No. 86)
10. Glory #0 (Awesome, No. 87)

LOOKINGBACK

What topped the charts FIVE YEARS AGO?

1. Spawn #22 (Todd McFarlane/Image)
2. X-Men #34 (Marvel)
3. Violator #1 (Todd McFarlane/Image)
4. Uncanny X-Men #314 (Marvel)
5. Superman/Doomsday #3 (DC)
6. Wolverine #83 (Marvel)
7. WildC.A.T.s #11 (WildStorm/Image)
8. Batman #509 (DC)
9. Adventures of Cyclops & Phoenix #3 (Marvel)
10. Superman: The Man of Steel #35 (DC)

Violator #1, the first issue of a Spawn spinoff mini-series, trounced most of the competition five years ago. Sales were spurred by writer Alan Moore (*Watchmen*), and penciler Bart Sears was a hot artist of the day. But alas, the ultraviolent series featuring Spawn's main villain was only a mini-series, and the mountains of copies have now decayed into a pit of sales slime. Much like the Violator himself.

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C.B.I.Q.

YOU THINK YOU'RE SO SMART...

COMIC BOOK INTELLIGENCE QUOTIENT

In a mad attempt to cash in on the Star Wars phenomenon, duct tape yourself to your chair, 'cause it's time for the all-outer space edition of C.B.I.Q. This month we'll be grading you against flavors inspired by "The Phantom Menace." The nummier the flavor, the higher your score.

SCORE	RANK
0	*BanAnakin Skywalker*
1-4	*Nabooberry*
5-10	*Dark Sidilicious*
11	*Yoda's Chocolate Swamp*

1 How did the Watcher respond when Wolverine dropped into his house during the X-Men's battle on the moon with the Imperial Guard?

A) He covered himself and blushed shyly.
B) He teleported Wolverine back outside and erased the visit from his memory.
C) He made a duplicate of Wolverine's brain to study all the information regarding mutantkind that it held.
D) He slapped Wolvie around, teleported him around to different eras in time, made him run across hot coals and then booted him out.

2 The golden-skinned, space-faring Adam Warlock is a native of:

A) The Blue Area of the Moon.
B) Earth.
C) Ego, the Living Planet.
D) "Golden-skinned, space-faring"...he's from Joel Schumacher's subconscious, from the sounds of it.

3 Nova got his powers when what crash-landed on Earth from the planet Xandar?

A) A radioactive meteorite
B) A damaged star fighter containing a prototype warsuit
C) A probe seeking a living vessel to pass on its recorded Xandarian heritage to
D) A dying soldier who passed his powers along to Richard Ryder, who was later sued by DC for such an obvious Green Lantern swipe

4 Speaking of Green Lanterns, why the hell did the Guardians of the Galaxy originally make the rings powerless against the color yellow?

A) As a fail-safe, so the Lanterns wouldn't be too powerful
B) So the Lanterns would learn to work around a weakness, becoming better, more capable soldiers
C) In their eyes, only God is perfect, so all else must be flawed.
D) Because yellow is the color of momma's boys, and the big-headed, blue badasses that the Guardians are don't want nuthin' to do with any momma's boys!

5 Hey, it's a Green Lantern three-way! I mean... "threepeat." Ugh...now I can't get images of G'nort, Ch'p and that fat little diamond/asparagus guy out of my head. Anyway, what planet did John Stewart, the universe's crappiest Green Lantern, have an unintentional hand in destroying?

A) Xanshi
B) Thanagar
C) Colu
D) As a side note, how great is it that Ch'p–the raccoon Green Lantern–was crushed by a truck. Sometimes DC rules.

6 The name of the Legion of Super-Heroes' M'onel–when translated from the Martian tongue–means:

A) "Valiant One"
B) "Wanderer"
C) "Champion"
D) "Dave"

7 What century did the crappy Guardians of the Galaxy take place in?

A) 27th
B) 31st
C) 22nd
D) The new millennium, by the way, starts in the year 2001, not 2000. That means we all have an extra year to live and maybe see what *Battle Chasers* #6 will look like.

8 Jupiter's moon of Titan is home to what unlikely, brotherly duo?

A) The Blood Brothers
B) Ronan and the Living Tribunal
C) Thanos and Starfox
D) Sid and Marty Kroft. And just what the hell is the deal with Pufnstuf, anyway?

9 The Shaper of Worlds is like a giant, albino Skrull with tank treads. Why?

A) He is a Kree-built robot designed to humiliate the Skrulls by mocking them with their image, but he gained self-awareness and escaped.
B) He is the adult form of a cosmic cube created by the Skrulls, so he looks somewhat like them, but "advanced."
C) He is the "ultimate evolutionary embodiment of the Skrull race," as created by the High Evolutionary.
D) Too many 'shrooms

10 Johnny Storm was one of the many Marvel casualties that some dim-bulb writer/editor decided should be married. Who...or what did he end up marrying?

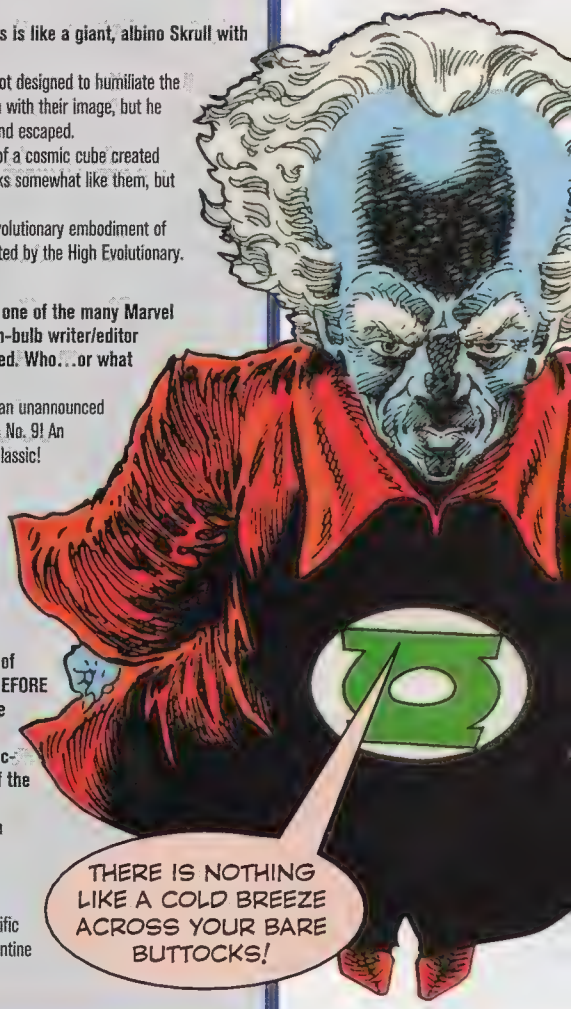
A) A Skrull, making this an unannounced tie-in to C.B.I.Q. question No. 9! An instant collector's-item classic!
B) A Dire Wraith
C) Crystal
D) Some Long Island yenta with a hag-like circle of friends. Someone get Johnny a gun.

11 Which two heralds of Galactus were buddies BEFORE they went to work for the giant, purple-helmeted guy? (And we mean Galactus. Get your mind out of the gutter.)

A) Silver Surfer and Nova (Frankie Raye)
B) Firelord and Gabriel
C) Terrax and Morgue
D) Hotpants Johnny Terrific and Lunchbox Gary Valentine

ANSWERS

Candy-asses can peek on the next page if this is too tough...



BULLPEN LOOK BEHIND THE CURTAIN

Shogun II

Frank Miller lied about Japan.

At least that's what *Wizard* Editor-in-Chief Pat McCallum and *ToyFare–Wizard's* sister mag–Editor Matt Senreich said after visiting the Land of the Rising Sun for the annual Tokyo Toy Fair; not once did ninjas crash through any windows. In an effort to better cover the toy market, the two hapless gaijin took the 13-hour plane ride, and here's what they learned:

• **Don't breathe the air!** At least that's the message they got after landing and seeing hundreds of people going about their daily routine wearing facial masks (turns out it's a common thing for people who are paranoid about catching germs to wear them). Weird.

• **Video Game Heaven!** You can't shake a giant, saber-toothed, flame-shooting, flying turtle here without hitting an arcade or electronics store. A three-way tie for the coolest stuff seen: cursing arcade machines, a demo for *Resident Evil 3* (called "Biohazard 3" there) and the fact that you can buy stuff there WAY before it hits American shores (yeah, *PaRappa the Rapper 2: UmJammer Lami* is ours!).

• **The Phantom What?** Star Wars isn't as big a deal over there as it is here. Instead, stuff like Doraemon (a robot cat from the future whose ears were chewed off by mice) and Anpanman (a cross between Superman and W.C. Fields whose head is a giant rice cake) rule the roost.

• **Japanese toys rule!** Damn, but the Japanese make their toys a lot cooler then we do. Expect to see all the cool stuff we saw as both *Wizard* and *ToyFare* expand their Japanese toy coverage in the coming months.

• **No tipping!** It's just not done (boy, did we weird out the bellhop).

PHOTO COURTESY OF MATT SENREICH.

TETSUOOOO! After spiking his drink, Pat greases the show mascot for info.

TOP 10

Top 10 predicted disappointments regarding "The Phantom Menace"

10 Yoda's nude scenes are all from the back.
9 No Jar Jar Binks-flavored burrito tie-ins at Taco Bell
8 Darth Maul's twin-bladed lightsaber lets him fly when he spins it over his head really fast.
7 Obi-Wan defeats his enemies by eating a can of spinach and bustin' the bad guys into mush.
6 No toy tie-ins
5 Damn! They raised the price of popcorn again!
4 Darth Sidious never says, "I'll get you next time, G-Force!"
3 Brian Benben...'nuff said
2 Only two children crushed by mob on opening day.
1 Lucas forgot to replace scenes of fat, growling stagehand with digitally animated Jin Lo Min monster.

CBIQ answers...

1. D 5. A 9. B
2. B 6. B 10. A
3. D 7. B 11. B
4. A 8. C

ONE OF THE DAMNED

DOING HARD TIME

Jim McLauchlin SENIOR STAFF WRITER

WHY WE PAY HIM: "I write 'till my fingers fall off, then I glue them back on (which is hard to do when you've got no fingers) and keep writing. In a typical month, I might write 20 pages or more worth of copy, including 'Magic Words.'"

BEST OUT-OF-CONTEXT QUOTE: "I'll hold it open. You pull it out." (In reference to Alex Ross artwork that was so tightly packed in a FedEx box, two people were needed to open it.)

MOST BIZARRE *WIZARD* MOMENT: "At a San Diego Con, I dared a fan to punch Specials Editor Doug Goldstein in the chest, not thinking he'd actually do it. Now, the fan was a giant, psycho hillbilly, and Doug's about 83 pounds. He punched him. Doug made this horrible sucking sound and couldn't catch his breath. He still hasn't forgiven me."

DEVIL FOOD: "A fan sent me a bizarre bottle of beer, and I put it in my office. Editor-in-Chief Pat McCallum thought I collected bizarre food products, so he started bringing weird crap in. Now, 49 items later, I have things like Brother Bru-Bru's Hot Sauce, People Pops, and Glögg, the traditional Scandinavian winter drink."

ORIGINAL ART: "This original Books of Magic page is one of only two in existence where Tim and Molly kiss. The owner of the other page has offered me up to $200 for this sucker. No dice."

HOCKEY STICK: "I grew up in Minnesota, where you're legally required to have at least one hockey injury. I got a tooth busted out of my head at age eight."

BASEBALL JERSEY: "Baseball is my life's passion. Every summer, me and my pals cram into a van and hit nine stadiums in, like, seven days. I've also got a huge memorabilia collection."

COFFEE: "Call me an addict. I'd sooner give up booze than Great Coffee, Giver of Life."

TARGET: "Besides pushing shopping carts at the local Target, I once helped about 40 fellow employees chase down a shoplifter. We caught him three blocks down, and handcuffed 'im until the fuzz showed."

HANDCUFFS: "Due to various misunderstandings with the law, I've spent a total of nine days in the Iron Bar Motel. I'm now a peaceful man and a law-abiding citizen. No, really."

COMICS: "I read about 100 a month to keep up. *Savage Dragon*, *Kabuki*, *Cable* and *Inhumans* are my current faves."

SAVOY PIZZA: "The Savoy Inn (East 7th and Lafayette, St. Paul, Minn.) has the world's greatest pizza. Friends FedEx it to me."

VACUUM: "When I was 2 years old, I tripped over a vacuum-cleaner cord and split my head clean open. I damn near died."

PHOTOS: PAUL SCHIRALDI

TIME TRAVEL by RUSSELL LISSAU

EVENT HORIZON

Marvel's 'Secret Wars' kicked off the first company-wide comics event 15 years ago

It was the first all-out mama jama.

Comic "events" that span dozens of issues and decide the fate of universes are commonplace now. But 15 years ago, company-wide crossovers were rarely seen. Each hero happily puttered away in his own title, meeting an occasional guest star for a quick fight and then tea.

That changed when toy company Mattel approached Marvel to produce a toy line of the company's characters to compete with rival Kenner's DC Super Powers line. *Marvel Super Heroes Secret Wars* was produced as a comic tie-in written by then Marvel Editor-in-Chief Jim Shooter and penciled by Mike Zeck. The highly publicized, 12-issue battle royale saw Marvel's top-tier heroes and villains transported to another galaxy by a godlike alien called the Beyonder. His rules were simple—fight or croak. The winners would receive their ultimate wishes; the losers would die. The brawl started in the first issue, dated May 1984, and didn't let up for a year.

Shooter penned the series himself so Marvel's writers wouldn't be at each other's throats over any character developments that might occur. "I was the editor-in-chief, and I was the only one who could get away with it," he remembers. "No one was going to like what I did."

No one, that is, except fans, who absolutely loved *Secret Wars*. At its height, it sold more than a million copies per issue. The series was full of wide-screen panels and large-scale confrontations, and Zeck relished working with a big cast. "I enjoyed doing all those characters," he recalls.

Secret Wars begat major continuity changes that affected Marvel heroes for years afterward, such as the end of Colossus' relationship with X-Man Kitty Pryde, the debut of the new Spider-Woman and the addition of the She-Hulk to the Fantastic Four. But the hero most affected by *Secret Wars* was Spider-Man, whose sporty new black costume attracted tons of mainstream media publicity. Web-slinger fans later learned that the outfit, designed by Zeck, was actually an alien symbiote that eventually evolved into the evil Venom. Zeck and Shooter had no clue they were creating one of Marvel's most-vile villains when they gave Spidey his new duds. "It didn't even occur to me," Shooter says.

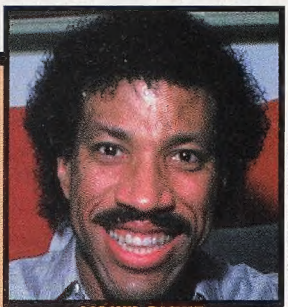
The series' success made company-wide crossovers and big "event" stories commonplace: DC's *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, *Secret Wars II* and "Onslaught" all followed, to varying degrees of success. Neither Zeck nor Shooter are proud of starting these crazes. Over-hyped comics that drastically change the status quo—usually only temporarily—only attract speculators, Zeck says, "and we all know where that got us."

As for the Mattel toys that started the whole thing, they're now highly collectible—far more than the comics themselves. Go figure!

DATELINE

MAY 1984

Lionel Richie's sappy ballad **"Hello"** reached number one on the *Billboard* music charts...Harrison Ford and his whip returned to movie theaters in **"Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom"**...CBS sitcom **"Kate & Allie"** hit the top 10 Nielsen-rated shows in its first season...The **Soviet Union** announced it would not participate in the Summer Olympics, held in Los Angeles.



LIONEL RICHIE

PHOTO COURTESY OF EVERETT COLLECTION INC.

'LOOK—WHITE CASTLES!' Captain America and crew might not be so gung-ho when they discover *Secret Wars'* success led to stuff like "Maximum Cloneage" and "Birthquake."

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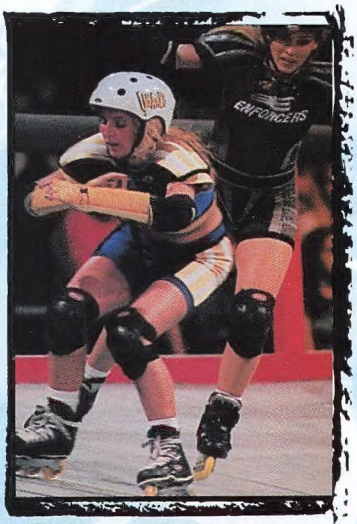
IMAGINE THE EXPLOSIVE POWER OF A LINEBACKER COMBINED WITH THE AGILITY OF A HOCKEY DEFENSEMAN. JUST TOUGHER.



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